

**Myth:** Healthy people don't need to be vaccinated.

**Fact:** While it's especially important for people who have a chronic illness to get the flu shot, anyone, even healthy folks, can benefit from being vaccinated. Current public health guidelines recommend yearly vaccination against the flu for everyone older than 6 months of age, including pregnant women.

**Myth:** The flu vaccine may increase my risk of getting COVID-19.

**Fact:** There is no evidence that getting the flu vaccine will increase your risk of getting sick from a coronavirus, like the one that causes COVID-19. In the contrary, the outcome of flu-COVID-19 co-infection may be severe.

**Myth:** If I get the flu, antibiotics will make me better.

**Fact:** Antibiotics are given to fight bacterial infections. They have no effect on viruses, including the flu. Taking antibiotics for the flu puts you at unnecessary risk of side effects. Also, this may contribute to you being resistant to antibiotics in the future.

**Myth:** The flu vaccine also protects against other viruses or bacteria that cause colds or stomach illnesses.

**Fact:** The flu vaccine does not protect against viruses or bacteria that cause colds or stomach illnesses. The flu virus is very different and typically causes more severe illness than the common cold or the stomach flu. The vaccine only protects against the viruses that cause influenza.



**LET'S KEEP OUR RESIDENTS, STAFF, FAMILIES, VISITORS AND OTHERS SAFE BY TAKING THE FLU VACCINE**

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HOW WILL THIS YEAR'S FLU SEASON LOOK LIKE AMIDST THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC?



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Epidemiologists have termed the potential co-infection, "a looming double threat". The flu may exacerbate COVID-19 or vice versa.

There is yet no vaccine against COVID-19 but there is a vaccine against the flu which is available annually. The best way to mitigate risk is by receiving the flu vaccine.

Learn more about the flu vaccine in order to dispel myths about the vaccine and controversies regarding vaccination.





## MYTHS AND FACTS

### ABOUT THE

## FLU VACCINE

**Myth:** The flu is not a dangerous disease, so I don't need the vaccine.

**Fact:** Worldwide, as many as 650,000 people a year die of the flu. The virus causes fever, chest pain, sore throat, runny nose, difficulty breathing, cough, headache, muscle and joint pain, severe malaise and worsening of existing medical conditions. It can also lead to complications such as pneumonia, bronchitis, asthma flare-ups, heart problems and acute respiratory distress. This seems like a pretty serious disease.

**Myth:** I have never had the flu, so I do not need to get the flu vaccine.

**Fact:** Most people can get sick with the flu several times during their lives. A laboratory test conducted on symptomatic persons can indicate an infection. A flu vaccine is the best protection against the virus.

**Myth:** The flu vaccine can cause influenza.

**Fact:** The inactivated flu vaccine or flu shot cannot give you influenza. The vaccine contains killed flu viruses that cannot cause an infection.

**Myth:** The flu vaccine causes severe reactions or side effects.

**Fact:** The flu vaccine is safe. Most people who get the flu shot only have redness, soreness or swelling where the vaccine was given. Some people, especially those who get the flu shot for the first time, may have a headache, muscle aches or tiredness.

Guillain-Barré syndrome (GBS) is a rare disorder where the body's immune system damages nerve cells, causing muscle weakness and sometimes paralysis. In rare cases, GBS can also occur after some vaccine or infections. Recent studies suggest that it is even more likely that a person will get GBS after getting the flu virus than after vaccination.

**Myth:** Getting the flu vaccine every year weakens my immune system.

**Fact:** Because the flu virus strains change most years, you need to get immunized each year to be protected against new strains. People who get the vaccine each year are better protected than those who remain unimmunized.

**Myth:** I should not get a flu vaccine because I have allergies.

**Fact:** Most people with allergies can get the flu vaccine without any problems. However, if you have had a severe allergic reaction to a previous dose of the flu vaccine or any part of the vaccine, talk to your health care provider. You may need to be tested for allergies before being immunized. People with egg allergies can be safely immunized with the flu vaccine.

**Myth:** I am a nursing mother and should not get the flu vaccine.

**Fact:** It is safe for babies to breastfeed after mothers receive the flu vaccine.

**Myth:** The vaccine does not work because I still get the flu.

**Fact:** There are many different types of viruses that can cause flu-like symptoms any time of the year, but these are not actually the flu virus. The flu vaccine protects against the strains of the flu viruses that health experts think will likely cause the flu during the flu season. The vaccines do not protect against other viruses that cause similar illnesses, such as respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) or parainfluenza. Because the flu virus strains change most years, you need to get immunized each year to be protected against new strains. In the elderly and people who have certain chronic health conditions, the vaccines may not prevent the flu completely but may decrease symptoms, complications and the risk of death from influenza.

**Myth:** I am pregnant and should not get the flu vaccine.

**Fact:** The inactivated flu vaccine or flu shot is considered safe at any stage of pregnancy. Women in the second half of pregnancy are at higher risk of hospitalization due to influenza, especially those in the third trimester. As well, women at any stage of pregnancy who have chronic medical conditions are also at higher risk of serious influenza complications and should be immunized.

**Myth:** You don't need to get a flu shot every year.

**Fact:** The flu virus changes (mutates) each year. So, getting vaccinated each year is important to make sure you have immunity to the strains most likely to cause an outbreak.

**Myth:** Getting the flu vaccine can make you more susceptible to other respiratory viruses.

**Fact:** Flu vaccines are not thought to make people more susceptible to other respiratory infections.