

Flu Vaccine: Just the Facts!

Fact The flu **is** a serious disease

Influenza affects the nose, throat, and lungs, and it can lead to pneumonia. Each year about 200,000 people in the U.S. are hospitalized and about 36,000 people die because of the flu. Most who die are 65 years and older; however children less than 2 years old are as likely as those over 65 to be hospitalized because of the flu.

Fact The flu shot **cannot** cause the flu

The flu shot, an inactivated vaccine containing killed virus (also known as TIV for trivalent, inactivated flu vaccine) is made from dead viruses and cannot give you the flu.

Fact The worse side effect you are likely to get from the flu shot is a sore arm

Local reactions such as soreness or redness are reported by about 15-20% of people who get a flu shot. It goes away in a day or two.

Non-specific systemic symptoms, including fever, chills, malaise (tiredness) and myalgia (muscle weakness) are reported in less than 1% of persons who get a flu shot. They usually occur within 6-12 hours of the vaccination and last 1-2 days. This is **not** a contraindication to future vaccination. The nasal mist flu vaccine might cause some nasal congestion, runny nose, sore throat or cough. The risk of a severe allergic reaction to a flu vaccine is less than 1 in 4 million.

Fact Four out of five people **need** an annual flu vaccine

All adults and children with a risk condition such as asthma, diabetes, heart, lung or kidney disease need to get a flu vaccine each year. It is also recommended that all children 6 months thru 18 years of age, adults 50 years and older and persons who live with or care for these persons (anyone at risk) should also be vaccinated annually. Make sure to include persons around infants 0-6 months of age (there is no vaccine recommended for this age group).

It is especially important that all health care personnel get vaccinated first!

Fact It is **not too late** to get a flu vaccine in December or later

Flu vaccine can be given before or during the flu season. The best time to get vaccinated is October or November. But you can get vaccinated in December or later. Flu disease activity begins in the autumn but does not usually reach its peak activity until February. Some flu activity will linger thru the spring months.

It takes about 2 weeks to develop immunity. As long as flu vaccine is available, continue to vaccinate until the vaccine is expired. Remember, flu vaccination is needed each year—immunity wanes in less than 1 year.

For more information: Michigan Department of Community Health www.michigan.gov/immunize
Adapted from *Flu Vaccines Myths and Facts* and *Epidemiology and Prevention of Vaccine- Preventable Diseases* 10th Ed. February 2008, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) www.cdc.gov/vaccines