

FAQs about the FLU



Is the flu the same thing as a cold?

No. Although both the flu and the common cold are caused by respiratory viruses, they are not the same. In general, the flu is worse and more intense than the common cold. Special tests must be done to tell if a person has the flu. Colds are usually milder than the flu. Symptoms of the common cold are sore throat, nasal congestion, green or yellow mucus, and feeling tired. A cold can last for 7-10 days, and doesn't get worse during that time. Colds generally do not have serious health problems, such as pneumonia or hospitalizations. Symptoms of the flu include high fever greater than 101 degrees Fahrenheit, cough (usually dry), headache, body aches, muscle and joint pain, sore throat, runny nose, vomiting, and loss of appetite.

Can the flu be treated with antibiotics?

No. The flu is caused by viruses, and antibiotics only kill bacteria. The only thing that viruses can be treated with is a prescribed antiviral medication, which can reduce the length of time one is ill, and can prevent flu-related complications.

What kind of complications can result from the flu?

Anyone can get the flu (even healthy people), and serious problems with the flu can happen at any age, but some people are at higher risk of developing serious flu-related complications if they get sick. This includes pregnant women, people of any age with certain chronic medical conditions (such as asthma, diabetes, or heart disease), young children, and people 65 years and older. These people are more likely to be hospitalized and occasionally die. Pneumonia, bronchitis, sinus infections, and ear infections are examples of flu-related complications. The number of deaths can vary from year to year, from a few thousand to more than 40,000.

Will the flu vaccine cause me to become sick with the flu?

The flu vaccine cannot cause flu illness; however, it can cause mild side effects that may be mistaken for flu. These side effects are NOT the flu. If experienced at all, these effects are usually mild and last only 1-2 days.

How effective is the flu vaccine?

Flu vaccines are made every year. They are designed to protect against the flu viruses that scientists think will be most common during the coming season. How well the flu vaccine works can range widely from year to year and depends on many factors, including the similarity or "match" between the flu vaccine that year and the flu viruses spreading in the community. Some years the vaccine is more effective than others. Sometimes it is possible to get the flu even after being vaccinated. Once vaccinated, your body starts to

Be a SUPERMOM

Getting vaccinated against flu during pregnancy is the best protection for your unborn baby, and also helps protect other members of your family.



Illustrations by Abby Hellstrom

make antibodies that help protect you from the flu. It takes about 2 weeks after getting the vaccine for the immune system to fully respond and for these antibodies to provide protection. It is also possible to have been exposed to the flu before getting vaccinated.

Is the flu vaccine safe?

Yes. Flu vaccines are safe and carefully studied before being released. The chance of serious harm or severe side effects from the flu vaccine is less than the chance of complications from being infected with the flu. The flu vaccines have been given to hundreds of millions of people for more than 50 years and have a very good safety track record. Each year, CDC works closely with the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and other partners to ensure the highest safety standards for flu vaccines. The flu vaccine is recommended for everyone 6 months of age and older. Pregnant women, young children, older people, and people with certain chronic medical conditions are at increased risk of serious flu-related complications, so getting a yearly flu vaccine is especially important for them.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

American College of Nurse-Midwives
www.ourmomentoftruth.com/The-Importance-of-Vaccines

www.lung.org/lung-disease/influenza/preventing-influenza.html

www.cdc.gov/flu

www.flu.gov

www.fda.gov/forconsumers/consumerupdates/ucm092805.htm

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