

# Flu Fact or Myth?

**"The flu is just like a bad cold." False.**

The flu is far more serious than a bad cold. It's a disease of the lungs, and it can lead to pneumonia. Each year about 114,000 people in the U.S. are hospitalized and about 20,000 people (mostly over 65) die as a result of having the flu. Children under two years of age are as likely as those over 65 to have to go to the hospital because of the flu.

**"The flu shot can give you the flu." False.**

Flu vaccines are made from killed flu viruses. These cannot give you the flu.

**"Even if I get the flu shot, I can still get the flu." Only partly true.**

This can happen, but the flu shot protects most people from the flu. The flu shot will not protect you from other viruses that can cause illnesses that sometimes feel like the flu.

**"The vaccine isn't 100 percent effective, so I'm better off getting the flu." False.**

No vaccine is 100 percent effective. But if you get a flu shot and still get the flu, you are likely to be far less sick than if you had not received the flu shot.

**"The side effects of the flu shot are worse than the flu." False.**

The worst side effect you're likely to get is a sore arm. The risk of a rare allergic reaction is far less than the risk of severe complications from influenza.

**"Not everyone can get a flu shot." True.**

If you are allergic to eggs (which are used in making the vaccine), are ill with a high fever, or have had a severe reaction to the flu vaccine in the past, you might not be able to get the vaccine.

**"Only the very old and the very sick need a flu shot." False.**

Adults and children who are in good health need a flu shot to stay healthy and avoid exposing someone who is more at risk because of their age (very young or very old), a medical condition, pregnancy, or weakened immune system.

**"December is too late to get a flu shot." False.**

The flu shot can be given before or during the flu season. The optimal time to get a flu shot is October or November, but a flu shot in December or later will still protect you against flu outbreaks.

## Resources

For more information on the flu or the vaccine, call the Healthline at (800) 333-3212 or check these sites:

[www.cdc.gov/nip/flu](http://www.cdc.gov/nip/flu)

[www.immunize.org/vis/2flu.pdf](http://www.immunize.org/vis/2flu.pdf) (flyer in English)

[www.immunize.org/vis/spflu02.pdf](http://www.immunize.org/vis/spflu02.pdf) (flyer in Spanish)

## Reference

Portions of this article were adapted from *Flu Facts for Everyone*, a fact sheet by the Centers for Disease Control.

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