

Flu Myths and Facts

Myth: The flu vaccine makes you sick.

Fact: You cannot catch the flu from a flu shot. The flu shot is made from “dead” virus. They cannot make you sick. The FluMist™ is safe and approved for flu prevention (the flu viruses are live but weakened). It takes about two weeks after you get your flu vaccine to be protected from getting sick with the flu.

Myth: Flu shots are 100 percent effective in protecting you from getting the flu.

Fact: The flu shot does not protect you from all illnesses and does not give 100 percent protection against the flu, but it can help keep you from getting seriously sick with the flu. It can also help shorten the amount of time you are sick.

Myth: By December, it’s too late to get the flu vaccine.

Fact: Even though the best time to get the flu vaccine is during the fall, getting a flu vaccine in December or later will still help protect you against the flu. Flu season can go on into springtime.

Myth: You can only spread the flu to other people after symptoms start.

Fact: You can also spread the flu virus one to two days before your symptoms appear. Adults can continue to spread

the flu for three to five days after symptoms start. Children can continue to spread the flu for up to seven days after their symptoms start.

Myth: Antibacterial soaps will protect you from getting the flu.

Fact: Strong soaps and hand-gels are not “better” than regular soap and water for getting flu viruses off your hands. Washing your hands well and often is what counts. Washing your hands with regular soap and water will help get rid of the germs and viruses that stick to the oil on your hands.

Myth: If I am healthy and never or rarely get sick, I don’t need to get a flu vaccine.

Fact: Getting a flu vaccine is one of the best ways to protect the people around you, including children, from getting sick. Health experts recommend that anyone who wants to reduce the risk of getting sick with the flu get a flu vaccine every year.

Myth: If I have a cold or the flu, taking antibiotics will make me well.

Fact: Antibiotics will *not* help treat colds or the flu. Call your health care provider if your symptoms are severe or get worse.

Protect Yourself and Others from the Flu

Here are some other ways to keep from getting sick with the flu (and other illnesses, too) or giving the flu to other people:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water.
- Cough or sneeze into your elbow or sleeve—*not* into your hands.
- Teach children to wash their hands and cover their coughs and sneezes, too!
- Stay away from someone who is coughing or sneezing.
- Keep your hands away from your nose, eyes, and mouth.
- Stay home if you are sick.
- Keep a child home if he or she is sick.

For more information on the flu, go to www.publichealth.lacounty.gov.