

FLU Facts & Myths

Flu Vaccination is the best protection.

The flu can have serious implications. Sure, most people who get the flu will recover just fine. But the seasonal flu also hospitalizes 200,000 people in the U.S. each year. It kills about 36,000. That's close to the number of women killed by breast cancer each year. It's crucial that everyone be able to make informed decisions about their care.

Last flu season, because of the H1N1 influenza pandemic, there were more flu-related deaths in the County than any previous year; 57 H1N1-related deaths since the novel H1N1 virus was discovered in April 2009. Furthermore, more than 900 people had to be hospitalized due to complications from H1N1.

"These deaths and hospitalizations can be prevented," said Wilma Wooten, M.D., M.P.H, County Public Health Officer. "Getting vaccinated is the single most important action people can take to protect themselves from the flu."

This year, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is recommending that people 6 months and older get vaccinated. The vaccine is especially recommended for people at higher risk of developing complications from the flu: pregnant women, children under 5, people 50 and older, those with chronic medical conditions and people in nursing homes or long-term care facilities.

"It is extremely important for people to get vaccinated and to practice good hand-washing hygiene," said Supervisor Ron Roberts at a vaccination clinic organized by the San Diego Black Nurses Association, the San Diego Immunization Coalition, and HHSA.

According to the CDC, more than 160 million flu doses will be available across the country. This is a 40 percent increase compared to previous years in anticipation of higher demand from the public.



"I encourage everyone in San Diego County to get their flu shot" Supervisor Ron Roberts

Many myths prevent people from getting vaccinated each year

Myths about the seasonal flu shots are everywhere. These myths may cause fear of, and even a concern about the safety or efficacy of vaccines

1- Young and healthy people, don't need to worry about it and get vaccinated. It's true that most healthy people are not at risk for the most severe flu-related complications, but the people around them may be. Their safety depends on the rest of us getting immunized.

2 I got vaccinated last year and still got sick. Many times people confuse a cold or other non-flu viruses that circulate during the flu season with the flu. Such as rhinovirus or Hepatitis A. Likewise, the sneezing and stuffy nose that always seem to accompany a cold are not symptoms of the flu. Unfortunately, the flu vaccination does not protect against a cold, or from other respiratory illness.

3-A flu shot can give you the flu The seasonal influenza vaccine provides the best protection available from seasonal flu. The flu shot contains a dead virus which cannot

reproduce in the body, but it can stimulate the body to build immunity to the virus. Similar to the nasal spray vaccination, called FluMist, contains a weakened live virus. The weakened virus is not potent enough to sicken the body, but will help it develop antibodies that protect against the flu.

What about people who get a seasonal flu vaccine and still get sick? People may be exposed to the influenza viruses before getting vaccinated or during the two-week period that it takes the body to gain protection after getting vaccinated.

4- Fall is it too early to get a flu vaccine. The CDC recommends vaccination can begin as soon as vaccine is available. Seasonal influenza disease usually peaks in January or February most years, but disease can occur as late as May.

5 - Antibiotics can fight the flu. Antibiotics only fight bacterial infections. Flu is not caused by bacteria, but by a virus. However, the flu virus can weaken your body and allow bacterial invaders to infect you, such as bronchitis, ear infections, sinusitis, and most often, pneumonia. If your flu symptoms instead getting better, suddenly get worse, call your doctor. This may be a sign of a bacterial co-infection.

6-The flu is only dangerous for the elderly. It's true. People over age 65 are most likely to become seriously ill or die. But children under 6 months are at the most risk from the seasonal flu. They're too young to get the vaccine. To protect them, keep babies away from people who have the flu. Parents and caretakers of infants should get vaccinated.