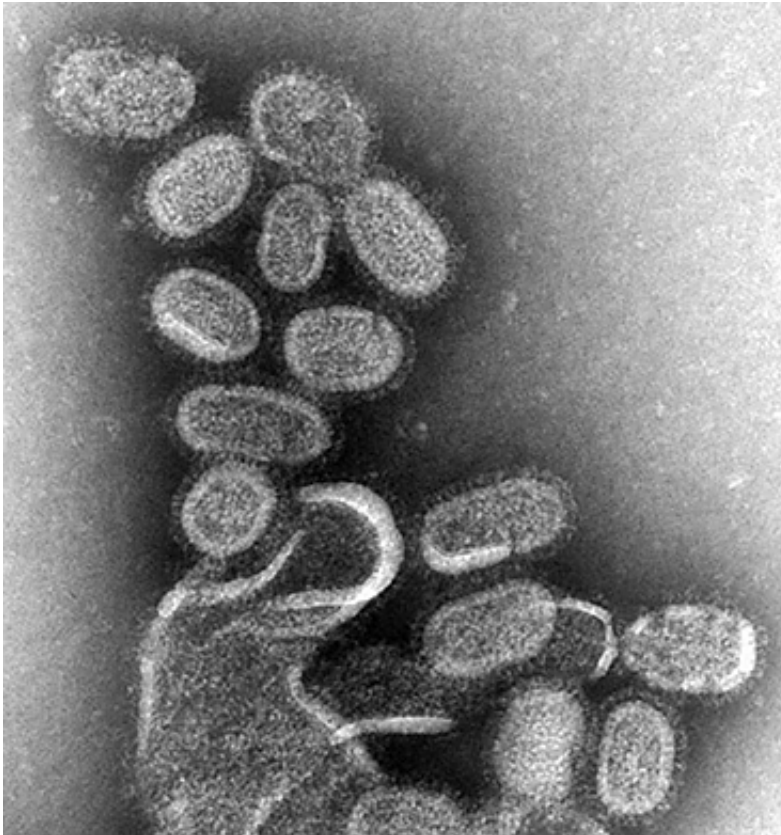


Expert advises preparing for flu season now

September 13 2016



Electron microscopy of influenza virus. Credit: CDC

The news that the nasal spray form of the influenza vaccine will not be available this year should not stop anyone from getting vaccinated against the flu virus, according to an expert at Baylor College of Medicine's Influenza Research Center. In fact, there are many different inactivated vaccine products for different populations available this year.

"This year, the CDC's Advisory Committee on Influenza Practices has made the recommendation that the live attenuated [vaccine](#) not be utilized this year because data from the last three years suggested it had reduced protection against the influenza virus," said Dr. Pedro Piedra, professor of molecular virology and microbiology and of pediatrics at Baylor.

However, the ACIP still recommends that all individuals 6 months of age and older receive the influenza vaccine, and Piedra agrees, noting that universal vaccination helps protect the entire community from the [flu virus](#).

"Last year, we had a mild year by flu standards, and I predict that this would not occur this year. We predict that H3N2 will be one of the dominant viruses circulating this year, and if that is correct, we should expect to have a more moderate to severe flu season," Piedra said.

He noted that the H3N2 viruses in general tend to have greater morbidity and mortality in older adults, and that all [flu strains](#) can be detrimental to an infant or young child's health.

This year, the quadrivalent vaccine will consist of four [vaccine strains](#): H1N1 and H3N2, which are both A strains, and B Victoria and B Yamagata. The [trivalent vaccine](#) will have both of the A strains and only one B strain, which is why Piedra recommends getting the quadrivalent vaccine if possible.

Piedra also noted that there are several types of vaccines available this year. For adults over the age of 65, there is a high-dose [influenza vaccine](#) that produces a better immune response for this age group, meaning better protection. Those with significant egg allergies can receive an egg-free vaccine. Children between 6 months and 3 years of age have a specific vaccine available to them that they can receive from their pediatrician.

It is safe for pregnant women to receive the flu shot during any trimester, Piedra said, and in fact, mothers will pass their antibodies through the placenta to their unborn child, protecting them from the virus during the first six months of their life.

Provided by Baylor College of Medicine

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