You'll feel the pinch this year: Get the flu shot

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This year, everyone will have to roll up their sleeves and receive the flu shot via injection, as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) no longer recommends the nasal flu mist vaccine due to ineffectiveness.

"Feeling the pinch is a small price to pay to protect your health and, importantly, to protect the health of those more vulnerable to illness," said Jorge Parada, MD, MPH, medical director, infection prevention and control program, Loyola Medicine.

"The message is still loud and clear," said Dr. Parada, a professor in the Division of Infectious Disease of Loyola University Chicago Stritch School of Medicine. "Everyone six months and older should be vaccinated effective immediately. The flu shot is safe and effective and it's a myth that you can get the flu from the flu vaccine."

Flu season traditionally begins in October and ends around April, peaking in January and February.

"It takes almost two weeks after vaccination for the flu shot to become fully effective," said Dr. Parada. "Similarly, it can take four to five days after exposure to the flu virus to develop symptoms."According to the CDC, the flu kills 3,300 to 49,000 people each year, with children and the elderly particularly vulnerable.

"Unlike many infectious diseases, the flu can be prevented and even

eliminated when everyone in a community gets the vaccine," said Dr. Parada. "Just as a hard hat is necessary safety equipment for construction workers, those of us who work in healthcare know that we need to take special precautions. Getting a flu shot protects ourselves, our patients and our entire community from harm."

Loyola is a leader in infectious disease prevention and is in its seventh season of mandatory [flu vaccine](#) as a condition of employment.

Each February, an FDA committee determines which virus strains will go into vaccines sold in America for the coming season. The committee considers which viruses are making people sick in Asia, where the flu season first begins, and the effectiveness of the previous season's vaccine.

According to the CDC, flu vaccines protect against the three or four viruses that research suggests will be most common. For 2016-2017, three-component vaccines (trivalent) are recommended to contain:

- A/California/7/2009 (H1N1)pdm09-like virus
- A/Hong Kong/4801/2014 (H3N2)-like virus
- B/Brisbane/60/2008-like virus (B/Victoria lineage)

Four component vaccines (quadrivalent) are recommended to include the same three viruses above, plus an additional B virus called B/Phuket/3073/2013-like virus (B/Yamagata lineage).

Dr. Parada offers the following tips to protect yourself and your community this flu season:

- Get your flu shot anytime starting now, and certainly before the end of October
- Wash your hands thoroughly and frequently throughout the day

- Cover your mouth and nose with the crook of your arm when you sneeze to limit the spreading of germs
- Stay home if you have the flu

"You'll know you have the flu, and not just a cold, if you also have a fever," said Dr. Parada. "Stay home for two to three days until you are not in danger of infecting others. And remember there are multiple strains of the flu virus so it is possible to get sick with flu more than once during the flu season."

Loyola University Medical Center is one of a few select hospitals who invest in universal screening of all inpatients for MRSA, was the only academic hospital to participate in a national C. difficile study and performs the most accurate testing for bacteria.

Provided by Loyola University Health System

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