

Gearing up for flu season—prevention is key

October 18 2016



President of Stony Brook University, Dr. Samuel L. Stanley, Jr. gets a flu shot annually.

Colder temps during the first months of fall are a stark reminder that people should start thinking about how to prevent the influenza virus, or the flu.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the best way to prevent the flu—which is a contagious respiratory illness that can have mild to severe symptoms in the nose, throat and lungs—is by getting vaccinated each year. Flu season begins in the fall and can run through May, so the CDC recommends getting vaccinated by the end of October which lasts the entire season.

Stony Brook University is urging students, faculty, staff and the community to stay proactive and get vaccinated against the flu. As a distinguished biomedical researcher and infectious disease specialist, the President of Stony Brook University, Dr. Samuel L. Stanley, Jr. has spent many years studying the biological mechanisms that cells employ when responding to infectious agents such as parasites, bacteria and viruses. Dr. Stanley gets a flu shot annually, and is raising awareness about the importance of getting a flu vaccine on campus and beyond.

"Every year about 40 million people in the United States get the flu," said Dr. Stanley in a new public service video. "About 19-million people will have to see a doctor. Many millions of people will miss work, and a lot of students miss classes."

The [influenza virus](#) is extremely unpredictable. Its severity can vary widely from one season to the next depending on many things, including the strains of flu that are spreading, availability of vaccines, how many people get vaccinated and how well the flu vaccine is matched to the flu viruses circulating each season.

"Every year I get my [flu shot](#). It's the best way to prevent influenza and really it's safe and effective," said Dr. Stanley.

Last week the Stony Brook Medicine Hospital Emergency Management Team vaccinated almost 1,700 employees and students during a 12-hour event and the Stony Brook University Hospital Employee Health

program is offering free flu shots to all employees and students with hospital access Oct. 17-19 from 7 am through 7 pm.

"This year's [flu season](#) is just beginning—New York has seen only a few reported cases so far—which means it's the ideal time to get vaccinated," said Saul Hymes, MD, Assistant Professor of Clinical Pediatrics and a specialist in pediatric infectious diseases at Stony Brook Children's Hospital.

The CDC recommends a yearly flu vaccine for everyone 6 months and older. Vaccines are available and can reduce flu illnesses and prevent flu-related hospitalizations. Flu vaccines have been updated for the 2016-2017 season.

"Vaccination is one of the best ways to add protection against many diseases, including influenza," says Susan Donelan, MD, Medical Director, Healthcare Epidemiology Department, Stony Brook University Hospital. "Even if you do get the flu, if you have been vaccinated, it may make the actual disease milder and better tolerated."

Dr. Donelan says that although the nasal flu vaccine was convenient, due to concerns from the CDC over decreased efficacy, it is not being offered this year.

Other ways to prevent the flu?

- Avoiding those who are ill
- Covering mouths when coughing or sneezing
- Washing hands frequently and thoroughly
- Staying home from work if sick
- Keeping children out of school and after-school activities if they are sick

The easiest protection tip? Get everyone in the family vaccinated.

"Getting vaccinated helps to protect against the flu but also helps to protect those who cannot be vaccinated," says Dr. Hymes. "All parents should be vaccinated to help protect their children. The [flu vaccine](#) is effective and safe, and it is not too late to get it!"

Provided by Stony Brook University

Citation: Gearing up for flu season—prevention is key (2016, October 18) retrieved 11 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2016-10-gearing-flu-seasonprevention-key.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.