

Why you need a flu shot now

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(HealthDay)—Flu season is just about here, and now's the time to protect yourself with a flu shot, doctors say.

"Every year about 40 million people in the United States get the flu. About 19 million people will have to see a doctor," said Dr. Samuel Stanley Jr., an infectious disease specialist and president of Stony Brook University in Stony Brook, N.Y.

"Many millions of people will miss work, and a lot of students miss classes," Stanley said in a university news release.

The best protection is a flu shot, Stanly said. Others agree.

"Vaccination is one of the best ways to add protection against many diseases, including influenza," said Dr. Susan Donelan, medical director of health-care epidemiology at 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," she explained.

Getting vaccinated also helps to protect those who cannot be vaccinated. "All parents should be vaccinated to help protect their children," said Dr. Saul Hymes, a specialist in pediatric infectious diseases at Stony Brook Children's Hospital.

The [flu shot](#) is safe and effective, he added.

Flu season begins in the fall and can run through May. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends getting vaccinated early. Protection will last throughout the [flu season](#), the agency says.

Other ways to try to prevent getting or spreading the flu include: avoiding those who already have it; covering your mouth when coughing or sneezing; thoroughly washing hands often; staying home from work if sick; and keeping children home from school if they're sick.

More information: The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has more about the [flu](#).

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