

# Young men face higher risk for rare flu complication

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(HealthDay)—Young men recovering from the flu should be aware of a

side effect that causes nerve damage, a health expert warns.

To combat the [flu virus](#), your immune system produces antibodies. In rare cases, these antibodies also attack myelin, which is the protective sheath around the nerves, explained Dr. Sheetal Shroff, a neurologist with Houston Methodist health system in Texas who specializes in neuromuscular disorders.

That condition is known as Guillain-Barré syndrome.

"Studies have shown that [young men](#) recovering from the flu have a slightly higher risk of developing Guillain-Barré syndrome," Shroff said in a hospital news release.

Initial signs of the condition include burning, numbness and tingling sensations in the legs. This can progress to muscle weakness, unsteadiness and falls. If untreated, people can develop total paralysis.

One study estimated that 17 of every million people with the flu develop Guillain-Barré syndrome, according to Shroff.

"What we don't know is the exact reason why young men are more likely to develop the syndrome than young women or even older men," she added.

"If anyone, but especially young men, recovering from the flu experiences even mild burning or tingling sensations in their legs, they should consult their physician as soon as possible," Shroff advised.

"When Guillain-Barré patients are diagnosed early on and treated appropriately, their physical strength will improve and their damaged nerves can be recovered," she said.

Getting a [flu shot](#), she said, not only makes you less likely to get the flu but also reduces your risk for complications such as Guillain-Barré syndrome.

**More information:** The U.S. National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke has more on [Guillain-Barré syndrome](#).

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