

Busting flu vaccine myths to keep you safe

October 1 2019, by Clark Kebodeaux



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It is that time of year—flu season is upon us. While there is extensive research supporting vaccination and the impact on public health in fighting infectious disease, you may have questions about effectiveness and safety of the vaccine. Allow me to ease your mind about the flu vaccine, as it is important to protect yourself and your loved ones against this potentially life-threatening illness.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends a yearly flu vaccine for nearly everyone six months and older, unless you have a medical reason not to receive one. According to the CDC, more than five million people didn't get sick during the 2016-2017 [flu season](#) because they got the flu vaccine. A three-year study shows the vaccine reduced the risk of being admitted to the hospital by 82 percent in adults. No vaccine is 100 percent effective but getting the flu vaccine can significantly reduce the risk and burden of disease. Patients at high risk for flu-related illness include children, pregnant women, the elderly and those with weakened immune systems.

The most common misconception surrounding the vaccine is its potential to give you the flu. It's possible to experience slight side effects like soreness, redness or swelling in the vaccination site, or a low-grade fever, headache and muscle aches. These reactions typically last one or two days. It is rare to experience serious reactions to the flu vaccine, and it is important that you discuss your full medical history with your [health care provider](#).

There are multiple types of flu vaccines, including a nasal spray. Different vaccines are approved for different ages and some vaccines are not recommended for specific health conditions. However, no one vaccine is better than another. Check with your physician or pharmacist about which flu vaccine is right for you.

It takes about two weeks for the flu vaccine to become fully effective, so it is important to get the vaccine as soon as possible. Before the end of October is an ideal deadline, and you should plan to get the flu vaccine annually. Because the virus changes every year, the flu vaccine is updated to best match the current virus. Vaccines are offered at clinics, pharmacies, [health centers](#)—and it's possible they're available where you work. Don't forget to ask for your flu vaccine today.

Remember: it's never too late to get the [flu vaccine](#). Flu season can start as early as October and last through April, but flu activity typically peaks between December and February.

Provided by University of Kentucky

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