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Mayo Clinic expert explains new vaccine options for next influenza season

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The next flu shot season will include several new vaccine options for consumers, Mayo Clinic vaccine expert Gregory Poland, M.D., says. Fearful of needles? There's now an influenza vaccination just for you. Allergic to eggs? It won't stop you from getting a flu shot. The new choices move influenza vaccinations closer to the personalized approach long sought by immunologists including Dr. Poland, but they may also prove bewildering to patients, he says.

"I think what's really going to be confusing to patients and to doctors and nurses is that we'll have seven different choices this year. We're used to the flu shot, we're used to the nasal spray, and that's all we've had, forever," says Dr. Poland, who heads the Mayo Clinic Vaccine Research Group and the Mayo Clinic Program in Translational Immunovirology and Biodefense.

The new influenza vaccine options available for the upcoming flu season include:

*A shot with four strains of influenza rather than the traditional three strains.

*Nasal sprays with four strains rather than the usual three strains.

*A high-dose vaccine for the elderly, to boost their immune response and protection.

*For those with egg allergies, two new vaccines without egg proteins.

*For the needle-phobic, a new vaccine delivered by a tiny needle called a micro-needle into the skin, rather than by a regular needle under the skin.

"So lots of choices of different kinds of vaccines that tend to be targeted toward individual age groups and fears, for example a needle fear. It really is ushering in a new era of individualized, or personalized, medicine," Dr. Poland says. "Instead of 'one size fits all,' this is a very real example of the incredible advances happening in medicine, where there's not one choice for everybody, there's a best choice for each individual, and that's what's happening with flu vaccines."

Work by Dr. Poland and the Mayo Clinic Vaccine Research Group includes research into what they call "vaccinomics" — the development of personalized vaccines based on the growing understanding of the role genetics play in how and why people respond to vaccines differently, including influenza vaccines.

Provided by Mayo Clinic

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