

## Flu Shots Work

Influenza can do more than make you feel miserable. Complications of influenza include pneumonia, sinusitis, and worsening of chronic health problems, often seriously. Thousands of people die every year in the United States from complications of influenza. Those at greatest risk of serious complications include young children, pregnant women, people with chronic health conditions like asthma, heart disease, and diabetes, and people 65 years of age and older. Some influenza viruses tend to cause more serious illness in young healthy people, sometimes even leading to death. Fortunately, safe and effective vaccines are available to prevent influenza infection or lessen its severity.

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention recommends the use of injectable influenza vaccines during the 2016-2017 flu season. The nasal spray flu vaccine will not be available this year due to concerns that it wasn't as effective as injectable vaccines in past years. The flu vaccine will protect against two influenza type A viruses and either one type B virus (trivalent) or two type B viruses (quadrivalent). The viruses selected for this year's flu vaccines are those that experts have predicted will be circulating in the country this year.

Everyone 6 months of age and older should receive an influenza vaccine every year. Infants less than 6 months of age are too young to receive the vaccine. They are best protected by making certain everyone who cares for them have been vaccinated.

The most common side effects from the influenza vaccine are soreness, redness, or swelling where the injection was given. Some people may develop a low grade fever or body aches for a day or two after receiving the vaccination. While many may claim otherwise, you cannot get the flu from an influenza vaccination. In scientific studies where some people received the flu shot and others saltwater

shots, the only difference in symptoms was increased soreness and redness as the injection site among people who received the flu shot. There was no difference in reports of body aches, fever, cough, or sore throats between the two groups.

Unfortunately, the influenza vaccine is not perfect and people can still get sick with flu symptoms after receiving the vaccine. Sometimes the experts guess wrong and a flu virus is circulating that wasn't included in that year's vaccine. The vaccine will not protect against the many non-influenza viruses that cause flu-like illness, although research suggests that those who receive the flu vaccine tend to have fewer such illnesses and colds than those who do not get vaccinated.

Flu shots and more information about influenza are available at the Adams County Health Department.

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