Seasonal and Pandemic Influenza Vaccines: Myths and Facts

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Overview

- Why should I be vaccinated?
- Will the vaccine potentially cause harm or put me at risk?
- Is the vaccine effective at preventing influenza?
Influenza is a serious disease that can lead to hospitalization and sometimes death. Every flu season is different, and influenza infection can affect people differently.

- 3-5 million severe cases/year
- 300,000 – 500,000 deaths/year
- An annual seasonal flu vaccine (either the flu shot or the nasal-spray flu vaccine) is the best way to reduce the chances that you will get seasonal flu and lessen the chance that you will spread it to others.
Why should I be vaccinated?

- Characterized by ability to change
  - Continually → yearly epidemics
  - Drastically → sporadic pandemics

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http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Influenza
Annual vaccination required for optimal protection
- Antigenic changes in circulating strains
- Vaccine-induced antibodies wane over time

Influenza vaccines cause antibodies to develop in the body about two weeks after vaccination.

Northern and Southern Hemisphere seasonal flu vaccines protect against three influenza viruses that international surveillance and research indicates will be most common during the upcoming season.
Will the vaccine potentially cause harm or put me at risk?

- Can influenza vaccine give you flu?
- Is it better to get the flu than face risks of the vaccine?
Will the vaccine potentially cause harm or put me at risk?

- **Common reactions to intradermal flu vaccine:**
  - Soreness, redness or swelling at the spot where the shot was given
  - Low grade fever and aches

- **Common reactions to nasal spray flu vaccine**
  - Runny nose
  - Nasal congestion, cough or headache
  - Chills, Tiredness/weakness
  - Sore throat
What about serious reactions to flu vaccine?

- Allergic reaction
- Narcolepsy
- Autism?
Is the vaccine effective at preventing influenza?

- Can I get seasonal flu even though I got a flu vaccine this year?

- What about people who get a seasonal flu vaccine and still get sick with flu-like symptoms?
Is the vaccine effective at preventing influenza?

- Can vaccinating someone twice provide added immunity?

- Should I wait to get vaccinated so that my immunity lasts through the end of the season?
Conclusions

- Influenza can severely impact health, but vaccines are safe and effective methods to prevent illness.
- Many common misconceptions about influenza are circulating.
- Complex issue impacts clear communication.