



QUESTIONS & ANSWERS ABOUT THE FLU VACCINE

Why should I get the Flu shot?

Simply, so you won't get the flu, hopefully. Influenza can be a very serious disease that could lead to hospitalization or in some cases death. Every year we see differences in the flu from previous seasons. Millions across the country are hospitalized and unfortunately some people die. The flu shot, received annually, is the best protection.

Why do I need an annual Flu shot?

The immune system's response to the previous year's vaccination begins to diminish causing its effectiveness to decline over time. Also, flu viruses constantly change; therefore the formulation of the vaccine has to be updated to give you the best chance of not getting the flu.

How soon will the vaccine begin to protect me?

Not right away. It normally takes about 14 days for the antibodies to become effective. So, if you are exposed to the flu before the two weeks have gone by, you may still get the flu. Some clinics across the country are already giving patients the flu vaccine for this year. The CDC website recommends you get vaccinated as soon as possible. October and November seem to be the months when the flu season begins to kick into gear. In the two weeks prior to the effectiveness of the vaccine beginning to protect you, try limiting exposure to large crowds and become conscious of washing your hands several times a day.

Who should get the vaccine?

Everyone who is 6 months old or older. Some people are at a higher risk of complications from the flu. If you think you might be at an elevated risk, make an appointment to visit your health care provider and discuss your concerns with them.

Should some people NOT get a Flu shot?

The best answer to that question is to recommend you talk to your health care provider. There are different vaccines approved for different groups of people based on age, health situations, both previous and present, and allergies to the vaccine or components of the vaccine.

In summary

The flu is a serious disease that could become fatal or could cause you to be hospitalized. The best protection is the flu shot. Nothing is 100% effective, however not taking the vaccine, if you medically are able, is opening you up to the possibility of catching the flu and feeling really bad for several days. Don't risk it. Talk to your doctor or other health care provider and consider getting the shot.

LtCol Gary Pickens
SER Health Services Officer