



TAYLOR TIDBITS

INFLUENZA FAQ'S

Influenza is a contagious disease that usually spreads in the fall and winter months. It is spread by coughing, sneezing, and close contact from someone who is sick with the flu. Anyone can get the flu.

Flu symptoms come on quickly and may last for several days. Symptoms include fever, chills, body aches, headache, cough, sore throat and runny or stuffy nose. The flu can make some people sicker than others. Those most at risk include people 65 or older, pregnant women, young children, people with other health conditions such as heart, lung or kidney disease or people with a weakened immune system. Each year thousands of people die from influenza and many more are hospitalized.

The flu shot is the best protection against influenza and getting vaccinated helps to prevent spreading the flu from person to person.

Can a flu shot give me the flu? No, the influenza vaccine cannot give you the flu. It contains an inactivated "killed" form of influenza which is not infectious. There are some common side effects from the vaccine such as discomfort or mild swelling at the injection site, a low grade fever, and/or mild muscle aches.

Who cannot get a flu shot? If you are allergic to any part of the vaccine for example eggs, if you have ever had Guillain Barre' Syndrome a severe paralyzing illness also called GBS or if you have ever had a life threatening allergic reaction after getting a flu shot.

Do I really need a flu shot every year? Yes, the CDC recommends that everyone above the age of 6 months should get vaccinated yearly. The immunity you gain from the flu shot decreases over time and therefore a vaccine is needed every year to get the best protection.

When should I get a flu shot? The CDC recommends that everyone get vaccinated as soon as the vaccine becomes available which is usually in October. Because the flu is unpredictable, as long as the influenza virus is circulating in the community it is not too late to get vaccinated, even into the winter and spring months of the year.

What about someone who gets the flu shot and still gets sick? You can still become sick from other respiratory viruses that "look like" the flu. The flu vaccine only protects you against the influenza virus. It takes about 2 weeks for you to build antibodies after getting a flu shot. You can also become sick if you were exposed to the flu shortly before you were vaccinated.

If you have received the flu shot this 2014/2015 season thank you for what you are doing to protect our patients, families, co-workers and visitors. If you have not received a flu shot this season, it is not too late. Please consider getting the flu shot for your protection and the protection of others.

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