



## Influenza Myth/Fact Sheet

**Myth: Influenza is no more than a nuisance, much like the common cold, that cannot be prevented.**

**Fact:** Influenza is a serious respiratory disease and is a frequent cause of hospitalization and death. **More than 200,000 people are hospitalized for flu-related complications annually and from 1976 to 2006, the number of flu-related deaths ranged from 3,000 to 49,000.** Getting vaccinated every season is the best way to reduce your chances of getting the flu.

**Myth: You can get influenza from the vaccine.**

**Fact:** Influenza vaccines are made from inactivated and live attenuated viruses and both types of vaccine cannot cause illness. Side effects may occur such as soreness, redness, or swelling at site of injection, fever, and aches; however, these are usually mild and short-lived.

**Myth: You did not get the flu vaccine in the fall so you have to wait until next year to get vaccinated.**

**Fact:** You can get the influenza vaccine anytime during the influenza season. Vaccination is recommended as soon as the vaccine becomes available (early fall); however, as long as influenza viruses are circulating, vaccination is beneficial because it only takes about two weeks for the body to develop antibodies to protect you against influenza.

**Myth: It is not necessary to get vaccinated against the flu every year because protection lasts from previous vaccinations.**

**Fact:** Flu viruses are constantly changing. As a result, a flu vaccine is developed each year to protect against the most common circulating strains for the current flu season. In addition, immunity to influenza viruses declines over time so it is important to get vaccinated every year.

**Myth: You should not get the flu vaccine if you are sick.**

**Fact:** Presence of a mild illness, such as a cold or allergies, without fever should not prevent vaccination. Individuals with a moderate-to-severe illness with or without a fever should wait until they recover to get vaccinated; however, vaccination is highly recommended for individuals with chronic illnesses such as asthma, diabetes, and heart disease because of a higher risk of developing flu-related complications.

**Myth: You should not get the flu vaccine because the vaccine may not cover the viruses that are currently circulating in the community.**

**Fact:** Influenza is unpredictable; therefore, it is impossible to know with 100% certainty which flu viruses will predominate during a flu season. However, experts choose which viruses to include in the vaccine based off results of many studies that assess how well viruses in the vaccine match to circulating viruses and how well the vaccine protects against illness. Even if the vaccine is not a perfect match for the circulating strains, it can still provide protection against different, but related viruses. This could mean milder illness or prevention of severe complications.

**Myth: You should not get the flu vaccine at the same time you receive the pneumococcal vaccine due to increased side effects.**

**Fact:** Both vaccines can be given at the same time (but at different sites) without increasing the risk of side effects. Influenza can result in many complications including pneumococcal pneumonia, especially in elderly persons so getting the flu vaccine can possibly help prevent pneumonia.

