

Get the Facts About the Flu Shot

This year is different.

Getting the flu vaccine, or flu shot, is more important than ever. With the additional risk of COVID-19 this year, we want to protect our patients as much as possible against other diseases, and the flu shot is your best protection against the flu. Getting the flu shot can help you and others stay healthy and help stop the spread of the flu.

There are many myths about the flu shot. This document explains the truths you need to know.

The flu shot cannot give you the flu.

When the flu shot is made, the flu virus is killed before it is put into the shot. That means it is impossible for the shot to give you the flu.

After getting the flu shot, your body needs two weeks to get ready to fight the flu. If you get flu shortly after getting the shot, it's likely that you were already infected or that the shot did not have enough time to work before you were exposed to the flu.

The flu shot can cause mild side effects. This is not the flu.

You may get a low-grade fever, headache and muscle aches after getting the flu shot. This may make you think you have the flu. But this is your body's way of preparing to fight the flu.

The flu shot is the best way to prevent flu.

The flu shot does not always keep you from getting the flu, but it is the **best option** to help keep you from getting very sick. If you do get the flu after getting the flu shot, your illness may not be as serious, and you are less likely to need to go to the hospital.

The flu shot is even more important if you are at higher risk of getting very sick. You are at higher risk if you have a chronic medical condition, are pregnant, or are a child or older adult.

Your flu shot also protects your loved ones.

If you get the flu shot, you are less likely to spread the flu to your family and friends.

You cannot get COVID-19 from the flu shot.

COVID-19 and the flu are completely different diseases. The flu shot doesn't have any ingredients related to COVID-19. The flu shot cannot give you COVID-19 just like it cannot give you measles or any other infectious disease.

Mild side effects from the flu shot are normal. This is not a reason to avoid the flu shot.

It is common to feel a bit achy or even feel feverish for a day or two. That does not mean the flu shot got you sick. This is your body's way of preparing to fight the flu. If you had more serious side effects from a previous flu shot that you think were not normal, talk to your physician before getting the flu shot.

Just because you have avoided the flu in the past does not mean that you cannot get it in the future.

The flu shot is an additional tool to keep you healthy. With the additional threat of COVID-19 this year, we want all of our patients to be protected against the flu. The flu shot is your **best protection**.

Masking, physical distancing and hand-washing are good strategies to avoid COVID-19 and the flu. The flu shot gives you even more protection from those who are not as careful as you.

No matter how careful you are, you are still exposed to people who may not be as careful. These are good ways to help protect yourself, but none of them offer complete protection. If you go to the grocery store or use public transportation, you may interact with people who are not masked or who stand too close to you. They can still get you sick.

The flu can look like COVID-19.

If you get the flu, your symptoms may be similar to COVID-19. You may need to have a COVID-19 test and quarantine yourself until we determine why you are sick. The flu shot can help you avoid getting sick.

Remember:

We recommend the flu shot because it is the **best protection** against the flu.

Flu shots have been shown to be safe and effective.

Everyone who works at Northwestern Medicine is required to get a flu shot.

If you have symptoms of flu, we may not know if you have flu or COVID-19. That means you may need to have a COVID-19 test and stay in quarantine until you get test results. Getting the flu vaccine could help you avoid getting sick at all.

Keep up all your other illness prevention practices: Wear a mask, wash your hands, maintain physical distance and limit gatherings.

Learn more about the flu and the flu shot at nm.org/flu.