

The flu vaccine

Can you tell the myths from the truth?

It's more important this year than ever to get your flu vaccine because of the double threat of COVID-19 and influenza. But can you tell the myths from the truth about the flu vaccine? Discover the truth, get the vaccine and protect yourself and others.

Myth: The flu jab gives you flu.

Truth: No it doesn't. The injected flu vaccine contains an inactivated virus that cannot give you the flu. If you feel achy or slightly feverish, it is a normal reaction of the immune system to the vaccine, and generally lasts only a day or two. The flu jab does not contain any COVID-19 virus and therefore cannot cause COVID-19.

Myth: The vaccine does not work.

Truth: The vaccine is the single most effective measure against flu and prevents millions of flu-related illnesses and deaths every year.

Myth: The flu vaccine lowers your immune system, so you're more likely to get flu.

Truth: No it doesn't. The flu vaccine has been shown to provide protection against flu. Other respiratory viruses also circulate at the same time and it's possible you may still get an infection with one of these.

Myth: I've had the vaccine before so I don't need it again.

Truth: The viruses that cause flu can change every year, so you need a vaccine that matches the new viruses each year. The vaccine usually provides protection only for that year's flu season.

Myth: I'm fit and healthy, so I don't need the vaccine.

Truth: Being healthy does not protect you against flu. There's no such thing as natural immunity to flu. Unfortunately, every year a number of those who die from the flu are completely fit and healthy people. Early studies show that for some people with both COVID-19 and flu, there is an increased risk of complications and death.

Myth: You can't spread the flu if you're feeling OK.

Truth: You could be spreading flu right now, even if you don't have symptoms. Vaccines aren't just about keeping you safe: they protect your family and friends. Even if you consider yourself healthy you may be risking the lives of others.

Myth: I shouldn't have the vaccine because I'm pregnant.

Truth: Pregnant women should get the flu vaccine. It is safe in pregnancy and can prevent premature birth and low infant weight normally associated with flu. Flu vaccine protects both you and your unborn baby from flu. It also provides protection for the baby for a few months after birth.

Myth: The vaccine isn't safe.

Truth: The vaccine is one of the safest in the world. The risk of having a serious allergic reaction is less than one in a million, much lower than the risk of getting seriously ill from catching flu. Vaccines are thoroughly tested and are safe. None of the vaccines used in the UK contain mercury.

What else you can do to stop the spread of flu:

WASH YOUR HANDS

You can help reduce the spread of flu by regularly washing your hands, particularly after sneezing or coughing. You can pass flu on without having any symptoms.



STAY AWAY

If you have flu, stay away from work until you are better. The virus is highly infectious and outbreaks can happen quickly.

