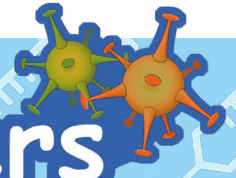


Flu Vaccine Myth Busters



1

Healthy people don't get seasonal flu.

Generally, 15-20% of the population gets flu each year – healthy people included! A healthy diet will help to boost your immune system but unfortunately can't prevent you from getting the flu.

False!

True!

Hand-washing is very important, but it won't stop flu.

It is vital to follow universal infection prevention procedures and wash your hands, but once flu has been passed on to your family, colleagues or your patients, clean hands won't keep flu at bay. Book your flu jab as soon as possible, and encourage those around you to do the same.



2

3

The flu jab can give you the flu.

It is impossible to get flu from the having the flu jab. This is because the vaccine doesn't contain any live viruses.

False!

False!

4

I've had the flu jab before so I don't need it again.

People should be vaccinated against seasonal flu every year. There's no such thing as natural immunity to influenza; with new strains circulating this year, it's best to get vaccinated against flu. The only way to protect against it is to update the seasonal flu vaccine every year.

5

Flu is just a bad cold so I don't need to be vaccinated.

For the majority of people who catch it, flu is very unpleasant and symptoms include fever, chills, headaches and aching muscles, a cough and sore throat. It can be much more serious for vulnerable people, including the elderly, and result in a hospital admission.

False!

False!

6

The vaccine is not safe.

The flu vaccine is safe and licensed for use in the UK. The current manufacturing process has been used since the 1980s and is tried and tested. Although a new vaccine is produced each year (to cover the new virus strains) the process of manufacture is the same and is safe. The risk of having a serious reaction to the seasonal flu vaccine is less than one in a million.

7

The side effects of the vaccination are really bad.

For the most part, side effects of the seasonal flu vaccination are really mild or often non-existent.

False!

False!

I can't have the vaccine if I'm pregnant.

8



The flu vaccine is safe for all pregnant women and can be given at any stage of pregnancy. We know that pregnant women who catch swine flu have a much higher risk of serious illness or death from the virus than other people. The earlier you have the vaccine, the better as this means you will be protected for the whole winter and it may also give your unborn baby some protection against flu during the first six months of life.

9

Flu vaccination could harm my unborn baby.

It is safe to give flu vaccine at any stage of pregnancy. In some western countries flu vaccine has been given routinely to pregnant women for several years. Follow up studies of children born to mothers who received flu vaccination, show no increase in stillbirths, congenital malformation or cognitive disability.

False!

True!

10

My baby will benefit if I have the flu vaccine.

Studies have shown reductions in hospital admissions during the influenza season amongst infants whose mothers had received influenza vaccination during pregnancy and there is also some evidence to suggest a decreased risk of premature and small for gestational age births. There is some evidence that if pregnant women are vaccinated, their babies may be protected from flu for up to six months after the baby is born.

11

You're infectious after the flu jab

The vaccine won't make you infectious to anyone, so it's safe to carry on as normal. It usually takes around two weeks to be fully immunised.

False!

False!

It's too late to have my flu jab

You should take up the offer of the flu vaccine when it becomes available, with the best time to have it from the beginning of October to the end of November. Don't worry if you haven't got it by the end of November, you can still get it later in winter.

12

13

Flu can be treated with antibiotics.



No, it can't. Viruses cause flu and antibiotics only work against bacteria. Antivirals may be prescribed – they do not cure flu but they can make you less infectious to others and can reduce the length of time that you may be ill. To be effective, antivirals have to be given within a day or two of your symptoms appearing.

False!

False!

Getting a flu shot every year weakens your immune system.

The vaccine prepares and boosts your immune system to help fight the virus if you are exposed to it. People who get the vaccine every year are better protected against flu than those who do not get vaccinated.

14

Who can get the free flu vaccine?

- Everyone aged 65 and over
- Those with long-term health conditions
- All pregnant women
- All 2 and 3 year old children
- Children in reception and years 1-5
- Everyone living in a residential or nursing home
- Everyone who is a main carer
- household contacts of anyone who is immunocompromised

For more: www.nhs.uk/flu vaccine