

Transcript

Every year, thousands of adults suffer from severe illnesses, and many may even die from diseases that can be prevented.

Influenza is an infection that can affect many people in many different ways. Sometimes the effects are mild, sometimes they are very serious. The good news is that influenza can be prevented, the best way is to get vaccinated every year.

Influenza, or the flu, is a virus that infects your nose, throat and lungs. It can spread through the air when someone talks, coughs or sneezes and can live on surfaces for up to 72 hours.

For many people the flu can cause fever, muscle aches, stuffy or runny nose, and sore throat. But for some people, especially people over the age of 65 or with a weakened immune system, the flu can cause more serious, even life-threatening, health problems like pneumonia.

The best way to prevent the flu is to get vaccinated every year. One flu vaccine contains a weakened or dead part of the germ that causes the infection; in this case, the influenza virus. There is also a 'live' flu vaccine. Both types of vaccine are too weak to make you sick. Instead, your body reacts to the vaccine by making antibodies which fight against the flu virus to protect your body.

After getting a vaccine, when your body comes in contact with those germs again, it already has the ability to fight them and can prevent the infection. But the flu virus changes very quickly. To best protect against any changes in the flu virus, a new vaccine is developed every year. That's why it's so important to stay up to date with your flu vaccine.

Everyone over the age of 6 months should get a flu vaccine every year.

If you have ever had a severe allergic reaction to a vaccine, talk to your healthcare provider before getting this vaccine. If you have an egg allergy or are allergic to the ingredients in this vaccine, talk to your healthcare provider. There may be a different vaccine option available to you.

Most vaccines are given by injection, but you may also be able to get your flu vaccine in a nasal spray. Check with your healthcare provider to see what is available and best for you.

The influenza vaccine is safe. But as with any medication, there is a small risk of side effects. When getting the vaccine by injection, the most common side effect is allergic reaction at the injection site. Look for redness, swelling and soreness at the site. These should go away after a few days. Less common side effects may include fever and muscle aches.

If getting the vaccine through a nasal spray, you may notice runny nose, headache, sore throat or a cough.

From either the injection or spray, if you have a severe allergic reaction like trouble breathing, hives, swelling of your face or throat; or if you have chest pain, fast heartbeat, dizziness, or feel like you are going to pass out, call 911 and get help immediately.

This is not the complete list of side effects. Make sure you discuss all possible side effects with your healthcare provider.

New seasonal flu vaccines are usually available beginning in September each year. Schedule an appointment with your healthcare provider to get one then, or stop by your local pharmacy or community health clinic.

It's a good idea to keep a list of all vaccines you get so you don't double-up in the future. Your records should include the date, type of vaccine dose and where you got it. Let a family member know where you keep this list in case of emergency.

The flu can cause serious, sometimes life-threatening health problems. But it can be prevented. Talk to your healthcare provider or pharmacist about getting vaccinated. It is the best way to prevent infection and stay healthy.