



Stay safe... stay healthy

Wednesday Wellness Message

This week's wellness message is to encourage you to get your flu shot.

Each year, seasonal flu kills tens of thousands of Americans and hospitalizes or seriously sickens hundreds of thousands more. This year especially, with active coronavirus spread, it will be critical for us to be vaccinated against the flu. It takes about two weeks to build up antibodies, so don't wait! There are numerous myths about the flu that the best medical experts in the world have debunked for us:

- 1. Myth:** *"The flu vaccine gave me/someone I know the flu."* The vaccine can NOT give you influenza. If you have mild flu-like symptoms following the shot, that is your body reacting appropriately to the vaccine and producing the antibodies you need to fight off influenza. If you happen to get the flu around the same time it would be because you contracted before the vaccine could take effect. **The bottom line is that the vaccine can NOT cause flu.**
- 2. Myth:** *"The flu vaccine doesn't ever/always work."* Flu vaccines use 3 or 4 different strains that experts predict will be active for the new season. Some years it's a better match than others to what is actually circulating, but even if you still get the flu, the vaccination will shorten/lessen the illness (good for you) and lower the transmission rate (good for anyone you might otherwise infect). [Also, the "stomach flu" is not influenza, so the vaccine doesn't prevent it or other viral infections.] **The vaccine works, even if not perfectly.**
- 3. Myth:** *"The flu vaccine is dangerous."* Contrary to some (discredited) reports the flu vaccine does not cause autism nor does it cause or increase likelihood of contracting COVID. The vaccine has been reported to cause an autoimmune issue in 1 or 2 in a MILLION patients, much lower odds than that same immune condition being caused by the flu or getting in a car accident on any given day of the year. **The flu vaccine is considered safe and well worth the infinitesimal risk it poses.**
- 4. Myth:** *"I don't need vaccinated because I never get the flu/have a strong immune system."* Some years, influenza is much more dangerous and contagious than others, so anyone can get it and suffer needlessly. This year because of coronavirus, preventing or minimizing the flu can avoid overburdening our health system and avoid longer term quarantine for flu symptoms mistaken for COVID. Also, the more people who get the vaccine the better the community protection, including infants and people who can't get it for medical reasons—so get it for others if not for yourself. **The flu vaccine is critical for your health and your community, especially this year.**