



## **Seasonal Flu Myths**

Influenza, often called the flu, is a highly contagious viral disease. Flu viruses infect the nose, throat and lungs. People get the flu when they come into contact with the virus, most often by breathing it in or touching something that has it on it (doorknob, phone, etc.). Protect yourself from the flu by learning to decipher between flu facts and myths.

### **Myth #1: Flu shots cause the flu.**

- **Fact:** The flu vaccine used in the United States is made from inactivated viruses that cannot cause the flu.

### **Myth #2: The flu is merely a nuisance.**

- **Fact:** The flu is a major cause of illness and death in the United States and leads to an average of about 36,000 deaths and more than 220,000 hospitalizations per year.

### **Myth #3: Flu shots don't work.**

- **Fact:** Flu shots are very effective in reducing illness. However, people often develop cold symptoms and mistake them for the flu, thinking the flu shot did not work. The flu and common cold are different and the flu shot cannot protect against a cold.

### **Myth #4: There is no need to get a flu shot every year.**

- **Fact:** Flu viruses change constantly. Generally, new influenza virus strains circulate every flu season and the vaccine is changed every year to adapt to the virus. It is important to get a flu shot each year.

### **Myth #5: I can't get the flu shot because I am pregnant.**

- **Fact:** All women who will be pregnant during the flu season should get a flu shot. Flu shots do not affect breastfeeding for the mother or child.

### **Myth #6: Flu shots are for older people.**

- **Fact:** Anyone who wants to avoid the flu should be vaccinated. Because the flu virus is highly contagious, it is important for people to get a flu shot to avoid spreading the flu to people who are at especially high risk, such as older people or people with chronic diseases.

### **Myth #7: The flu is only spread by direct contact with someone who is sick.**

- **Fact:** Flu viruses live for two to eight hours on items such as doorknobs, telephones and keyboards. Use alcohol-based hand sanitizers, cleaners and wipes in common areas to avoid spreading viruses.

### **Myth #8: The seasonal flu is the same as the stomach flu.**

- **Fact:** Vomiting, diarrhea and being nauseated (or "sick to your stomach") can sometimes be related to the flu – more commonly in children than adults – but these problems are rarely the main symptoms of the influenza. The flu is a respiratory disease and not a stomach or intestinal disease.