

HEALTH IN OUR HANDS!

The Arkansas State University Wellness Program Newsletter
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The Flu Vaccine

Overview

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) defines influenza (flu) as an infectious respiratory disease caused by influenza viruses. Each year an average of 62 million people in the United States are diagnosed with the flu, and health care and worker absenteeism expenses cost the country \$10.4 billion.

The Arkansas Department of Health's 2013 report stated the flu was the eight leading cause of death in Arkansas, contributing to 74 fatalities. This statistic shows an increase compared to recent years.

The best prevention against the flu is getting vaccinated each year. Flu vaccines are given by shot or by nasal spray. The 2014-2015 flu vaccine protects against the following viruses:

- A/California/7/2009 (H1N1)pdm09-like virus

- A/Texas/50/2012 (H3N2)- like virus
 - B/Massachusetts/2/2012-like virus
- Although the flu vaccine is the best way to prevent influenza, only 47% of people in Arkansas, including children and adults, were vaccinated last year.

Who needs to get vaccinated

According to the CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) all people 6 months of age and older should get a flu vaccine each year. It is extremely important for people who are at high risk of complications from the flu to receive the flu vaccine. These include:

- Children younger than 5 years, but particularly children younger than 2 years.
- Adults 65 years or older

- Pregnant women
- American Indians and Alaskan Natives
- Individuals with the following health conditions:
 - Asthma
 - Heart Disease
 - Blood disorders, such sickle cell disease
 - Diabetes
 - Kidney Disorders
 - Liver disorders
 - HIV/AIDs
 - Cancer
 - BMI of 40 or greater

Flu Vaccine and Pregnancy

The flu is more dangerous in pregnant women than in non-pregnant women because their body experiences many changes to the immune system, heart and lungs. Due to the severity of the illness, all pregnant women should get a flu shot at the beginning of the flu

season unless their doctor says otherwise. Side effects associated with the flu in pregnant women are the following: miscarriages, premature birth, and low birth weight as well as death of the mother.

The flu shot is the best defense against developing influenza. Women can receive the flu shot at any time during their pregnancy. It is of utmost importance to be vaccinated early in the flu season to avoid the chance of obtaining the flu.

Side Effects

Although some people believe flu shots and nasal sprays can produce influenza, the CDC states this is not the case. The flu vaccine comes in two forms. The first form contains an inactive virus and the other does not have a virus. The nasal spray has active viruses but in a weakened state. The viruses in the nasal spray can only survive in cooler temperatures which eliminates the possibility of the virus infecting the lungs due to their warmth.

Even though flu shots and nasal sprays do not contribute to influenza, individuals may experience particular side effects from the vaccines. The following is a list of flu shot side effects:

- Soreness, redness or swelling where the needle penetrated the skin
- Low grade fever

• Body Aches
The following is a list of nasal spray side effects in children:

- Runny nose
- Wheezing
- Headache
- Vomiting
- Muscle Aches
- Fever

The following is a list of nasal spray side effects in adults:

- Runny nose
- Headache
- Sore throat
- Cough

When to get vaccinated

One should become vaccinated as soon as the vaccine is available. This is usually in October. It is important for children 6 months to 8 years to receive the vaccine in October because two doses of the vaccine are needed. The second dose is given 4 weeks after the first dose.

Where to get vaccinated

Flu vaccines are offered in the following locations:

- Doctor's office
- Urgent care clinics
- Health department
- Pharmacies, such as Walgreens
- Employer sites
- Schools

Flu Vaccine Finder is a tool that allows an individual to find vaccines in his or her area. One can access Flu Vaccine Finder at

<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/keyfacts.htm>

References

- <http://healthyamericans.org/report/112/>
- miscarriage/index.html
- <http://www.cdc.gov/FeatuFea/PregnancyAndFlu/>
- <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/prrote/keyfacts.htm>
- <http://www.flu.gov/prevprev-vaccination/vaccination/iinde.html>
- <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/adults/find-pay-vaccines.html>

Other News:

**If you have any suggestions for newsletter topics, please contact Dean Susan Hanrahan at hanrahan@astate.edu.

The Arkansas State University Employee Wellness Newsletter is published monthly during the academic year by the College of Nursing and Health Professions. Health questions can be addressed to Dean Susan Hanrahan, Ph.D., ext. 3112 or hanrahan@astate.edu. Produced by Kayla James, graduate student in the College of Nursing and Health Professions, Physical Therapy Program.