

Sorting through myths-facts of flu vaccine

By Tara Helle, NPR

Brace yourselves: Flu season is coming. And along with the coughing, fevers and aches you can expect a lot of unreliable or downright wrong information about the flu vaccine.

Flu kills more people in a year in the U.S. than Ebola has killed in the history of the world.

Many people underestimate the health risks from flu. Thousands of Americans die from flu-related complications in a typical year, and last season's H1N1 strain hit young adults particularly hard.

Flu and pneumonia combined consistently rank among the top 10 causes of death in the U.S., according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. It was ranked eighth in 2011, the most recent year for which data are available.

Getting a shot (or an immunizing spritz up the nose) isn't a perfect defense against flu. Some years the strains used to make vaccines aren't a good match for the type of flu that eventually strikes. But vaccination remains the most reliable way to reduce the risk for illness.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that everyone 6 months of age and older gets vaccinated against flu every year, with rare exceptions, such as those with severe, life-threatening allergies to flu vaccine ingredients or potentially those with a history of Guillain-Barré syndrome following a previous flu shot.

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