

# SHARE THE WELLNESS TIP



November 6, 2015

## Take a Shot At Beating The Flu



Your schedule keeps getting busier as we get into the fall season, and you probably didn't schedule time for being sick with the flu for three days to a week or more. So don't let the flu take you out. Getting a flu shot is an important part of preventive care – the kind of care you need to help stay healthy. Flu season starts in October, peaks between December and February, and can run through May.

### Myth Busters

Don't let a big flu shot myth stop you: You cannot get the flu from a flu shot. There are some possible side effects, but they're usually mild. The shot may cause redness, soreness or swelling at the injection site. An over-the-counter pain reliever may ease the minor side effects. Ask your health care provider for more information.

### Germ on the Move

What is the flu, and how do people get it? Influenza (commonly called the flu) is a respiratory disease that is spread mostly from person to person through coughs and sneezes.

The flu can be spread before any symptoms appear. This is why others can give you the flu even before they know they have it. It's just one more reason to protect yourself with a flu shot and avoid the chills, fever and high temperatures the flu brings.

### Part of the Herd

You know getting vaccinated protects you. But did you know that it also protects your loved ones and the rest of the community? Being vaccinated lowers the chance that you will spread the virus. That's important because the flu can be especially dangerous for young children, older people and those with chronic health conditions. And these people may not be able to get vaccinated. Getting vaccinated to protect others is called "herd immunity." The immunized "herd" helps to protect those who cannot get vaccinated.

### How Does the Flu Shot Protect Me?

What exactly does the flu shot protect against? Each year's flu vaccine is developed to protect against the strains of the virus that scientists predict will be most common in the upcoming flu season. All of the 2015-2016 influenza vaccines are made to protect against the following three viruses: H1N1, H3N2 and B/Yamagata. Even in years when the flu viruses change during the flu season, antibodies from a flu shot are still likely to provide some protection.

### Who, Me?

Should everyone get the flu vaccine? For the 2015-2016 flu season, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that all people ages 6 months and older be vaccinated against influenza, including pregnant women. Children younger than 9 years old may need two doses during the same flu season. For everyone else, only one dose is needed for each flu season. A higher dose vaccine may be recommended for those 65 and older. Since defenses become weaker with age, older people can be at greater risk of severe illness from influenza. The higher dosage in the vaccine may help give older people a better immune response leading to better protection against flu.

### Nervous About Needles?

Ask your health care provider if a vaccine that can be given without a needle is available.

### Location, Location, Location

So where can you get a flu shot? Flu shots are offered by many doctors' offices, clinics, health departments and other locations. But if you want to get your flu shot from a provider other than your in-network primary care physician, call the customer service number on your Blue Cross and Blue Shield card to make sure getting a flu shot from that provider will be covered.

**Sources:** Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2015; Flu.gov