

For A Healthier You

Employee Health e-Newsletter



NASA Office of the Chief Health and Medical Officer
NASA Occupational Health www.ohp.nasa.gov

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Influenza Vaccine Season 2010-2011

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends a yearly Influenza (flu) vaccine for everyone over the age of six months as the first and most important step in protecting against this serious disease. In addition, to protect yourself and your family, you can take everyday preventive steps like staying away from sick people and washing your hands to reduce the spread of germs. If you are sick with flu, stay home from work or school from the onset of symptoms to one day after a fever is gone without the use of fever reducing medications

Influenza is a viral infection that attacks your respiratory system, the nose, throat and lungs, and occasionally the gastro-intestinal system. Influenza and its complications can be deadly. The CDC estimates that tens of thousands of people in the United States die each year of complications of influenza. Your best defense against influenza is to receive an annual vaccination. People at higher risk of developing flu complications include:

- Young children
- Older adults
- Pregnant women
- People with weakened immune systems

- People who have chronic illnesses

While there are many different flu viruses, the flu vaccine is designed to protect against the three main flu strains that research indicates will cause the most illness during the flu season. The 2010-2011 flu vaccine will protect against the following three different flu viruses: an H3N2 virus which is an influenza A virus, an influenza B virus, and the H1N1 virus that caused so much illness last season.

Getting the flu vaccine soon after it becomes available each year is always a good idea, and the protection you get from vaccination will last throughout the flu season. Flu activity most commonly peaks in the U.S. in January or February. However, seasonal flu activity begins in the fall (Sept/Oct) and can continue as late as May.

The effectiveness of the vaccine can vary and depends in part on the match between the viruses in the vaccine and the circulating flu viruses in the community. It's not possible to predict with certainty which flu viruses will predominate during a given season. But the CDC and their partners are involved in continual research activities to identify the predominant flu strains.

The method used to produce vaccines requires experts to pick which viruses to include in the vaccine many months in advance to ensure their timely production and

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delivery. Because of these factors, there is always the possibility of a less than optimal match between circulating viruses and the strains identified for the vaccine production.

It is important to remember that even during seasons when the vaccine is not optimally matched to predominant circulating viruses, the CDC and other experts continue to recommend flu vaccine as the best way to protect against the illness. This is because antibodies made in response to vaccination with one strain of flu viruses can provide protection against different, but related strains. It is important to note that in 16 of the last 20 U.S. influenza seasons the viruses in the influenza vaccine have been well matched to the predominant circulating viruses.

This year's flu vaccine however, has consumers worried about salmonella, a bacterial infection. The flu vaccine is manufactured by growing the flu virus in chicken eggs but eggs have been linked to a salmonella outbreak this summer. According to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) consumers should not worry because the eggs used for flu vaccine production come from a different farm than those used for consumption. These eggs are tested vigorously and extensively under bio-security regulations. Not only are the eggs tested, every lot of the flu vaccine is also tested prior to distribution.

If you get sick with the flu, which is different than having the common cold, there are drugs that can treat flu illness. They are called antiviral drugs and they can make your illness milder and make you feel better faster. For more information about antiviral drugs and other information that you have read in this article visit www.cdc.gov/flu or www.nasahealthieryou.com.

As part of the HealthierYou Campaign, NASA Occupational Health Clinics will be offering a limited amount of Influenza vaccines starting in the September or October time frame of each year. [Please contact your center's clinic for the exact information about their vaccination drive.](#)

The FDA has approved several vaccines in both nasal spray and injectable forms. Please consult your healthcare provider for the most suitable vaccine type for you and your family. For a list of available vaccines and other related information please visit www.fda.gov.