Flu Shots Myths... Busted

A crucial part of staying healthy — this flu season and beyond — is staying informed. There's plenty of flu misinformation circulating out there. Find the truth behind some of the most common myths about the flu.

Myth: The flu is just a really bad cold

Fact: The flu is serious stuff. It can be life-threatening, with the ability to cause secondary bacterial infections such as pneumonia. Nearly 200,000 people end up in the hospital each year.

Myth: The flu vaccine will give me the flu

Fact: You cannot get the flu from your flu shot. Why? That vaccine is made from a dead or inactive virus that can no longer spread its fever-spiking properties. In rare cases, a person may experience a reaction to the shot that includes a low-grade fever, but these reactions are not the flu.

Myth: If I got a flu shot last year, that should be good enough

Fact: It is easy to be confused about this. After all, we don't get vaccinated for other things, like measles or tetanus, every single year. But with the seasonal flu, it is important to get the vaccine each year. That's because the dominant flu strains change from year to year, so getting vaccinated annually keeps you protected.

Myth: Antibiotics can fight the flu

Fact: Plain and simple, antibiotics fight bacteria, not viruses. The flu — and colds, for that matter — are caused by viruses. In fact, antibiotics kill off the "good" bacteria that help to fight off infections, so that viral flu may only get worse.

Myth: If you're young and healthy, you don't need the shot

Fact: Everyone 6 months and older should get an influenza (flu) vaccine every season with rare exception. If you are young and healthy, it's true you will likely recover just fine from the flu. But why get sick in the first place if you can prevent it? Also, keep in mind all of the people in your life that would likely not recover easily from the flu — such as small children, the elderly, and those with chronic medical conditions.

So, the bottom line is this: get your flu shot!

TOTAL**WELL**NESS