



American Heart Association.

# FLU MYTHS



**The facts are simple:** Getting a flu shot every year decreases your chances of getting the flu. You're also less likely to be hospitalized or die from it, especially if you have heart disease or have had a stroke.<sup>1</sup> Getting a flu shot will help protect your health and the people you care about. Let's bust some common myths about getting the flu vaccine!



**MYTH:** The flu isn't that bad.



**BUSTED!** It can be bad, especially if you're in a high-risk population for severe flu complications including adults ages 65. Older and those with chronic health conditions such as heart disease or diabetes, pregnant women, and children under the age of 2 are also at higher risk.<sup>1</sup>

*There's a strong correlation between the flu and heart disease and stroke. During recent flu seasons, about half of all adults hospitalized for the flu also had heart disease. And a 2018 study found that the risk of having a heart attack was six times higher within a week of a confirmed flu infection.*



**MYTH:** The vaccine's side effects are worse than the flu.



**BUSTED!** Most people tolerate the vaccine very well. Some people report mild side effects such as soreness, redness, tenderness or swelling, low-grade fever, headache and muscle aches.<sup>2</sup>

But the flu can cause much worse symptoms such as fever or feeling feverish/chills, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, muscle or body aches, headaches and/or fatigue.<sup>3</sup>

*Reduce your chances of feeling bad after you receive a flu shot. Stay hydrated, move your body with arm circles or a walk, apply ice at the injection site if it's sore and avoid smoking or drinking.<sup>3</sup>*



**MYTH:** I got a flu vaccine last year, so I'm good to go.



**BUSTED!** You need a flu vaccine every year because immunity wanes over time. Flu virus vaccines are also constantly updated to protect against the most recent strain.<sup>4,5</sup>



**MYTH:** I got my COVID-19 vaccine(s), so I don't need a flu shot.



**BUSTED!** Unfortunately, your COVID-19 vaccine won't prevent the flu since two different viruses cause them. The good news is that you can get a COVID-19 vaccine and other vaccines, including a flu vaccine, at the same visit.<sup>6</sup>



**MYTH:** Only elderly people need to worry about the flu.



**BUSTED!** People 65 and older are at higher risk of developing serious flu complications compared with young, healthy adults. People from under-represented racial and ethnic groups are also hit harder by the flu. Black, Hispanic, and American Indian and Alaska Native people have had consistently higher rates of severe flu outcomes, including hospitalization and ICU admission from 2009 to 2023.<sup>2,3</sup>

## HIGH-DOSE VACCINE

Typically, the flu season hits people 65 and older the hardest. Between 70% and 85% of seasonal flu-related deaths occur in people 65 and older. Between 50% and 70% of seasonal flu-related hospitalizations also hit this group.<sup>7</sup> Ask your health care professional about a high-dose vaccine. If one isn't available, a standard flu vaccine is better than none.

Visit [heart.org/Flu](https://heart.org/Flu) for more information

1. <https://www.cdc.gov/flu-vaccines-work/benefits/index.html#:~:text=Flu%20vaccination%20can%20keep%20you%20from%20getting%20sick%20with%20flu.&text=During%20seasons%20when%20flu%20vaccine,flu%20by%2040%20%2D%2060%25>  
2. [https://www.cdc.gov/flu/vaccine-safety/?CDC\\_AAref\\_Val=https://www.cdc.gov/flu/prevent/general.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/flu/vaccine-safety/?CDC_AAref_Val=https://www.cdc.gov/flu/prevent/general.htm)  
3. [https://www.cdc.gov/flu/signs-symptoms/?CDC\\_AAref\\_Val=https://www.cdc.gov/flu/symptoms/symptoms.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/flu/signs-symptoms/?CDC_AAref_Val=https://www.cdc.gov/flu/symptoms/symptoms.htm)  
4. <https://www.cdc.gov/flu-vaccines-work/how-well/index.html>  
5. <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/vaccines/keyfacts.html>  
6. <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/vaccines/coadministration.html>  
7. <https://www.cdc.gov/respiratory-viruses/risk-factors/older-adults.html#:~:text=In%20recent%20years%2C%20it's%20estimated,people%20in%20this%20age%20group.>