



Public Health

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Seasonal Influenza (Flu)

Cases of the Flu are rising. Preventing the spread of influenza is essential for good health. Getting a vaccination is the easiest way to protect yourself and family members from this preventable illness. There are many myths about the flu, but here are the Facts:

Myth: You don't need to get a flu shot every year.

Fact: The flu virus changes (mutates) each year. So getting vaccinated each year is important to make sure you have immunity to the strains most likely to cause an outbreak.

Myth: You can catch the flu from the vaccine.

Fact: The flu shot is made from an inactivated virus that can't transmit infection. So people who get sick after receiving a flu vaccination were going to get sick anyway. It takes a week or two to get protection from the vaccine. But people assume that because they got sick after getting the vaccine, the flu shot caused their illness.

Myth: Getting the flu vaccination is all you need to do to protect yourself from the flu.

Fact: There are a number of steps you can take to protect yourself during flu season besides vaccination. Avoid contact with people who have the flu, wash your hands frequently, and consider taking anti-viral medications if you were exposed to the flu before being vaccinated.

Myth: I got the flu even though I had my shot, so the vaccine must not work.

Fact: Many people believe they have the flu but in fact are suffering from a different respiratory virus. It's also possible that you were exposed to influenza before the vaccine kicked in, or you came down with a strain of flu that wasn't included in that year's shot. Nonetheless, vaccinated people who do get sick with flu normally experience milder symptoms than those who skip the shot.

Myth: I'm young and healthy, so I don't need to get the flu shot.

Fact: The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, or CDC, recommends that everyone 6 months and older get vaccinated for the flu. Healthy people also can spread the virus to others who are particularly susceptible, including newborn babies, senior citizens and those with weakened immune systems.

So far this year the flu is impacting younger people at a higher rate than the rest of the population. However it is not too late to get your flu shot. Get your flu shot from your primary doctor or call the health department to set up an appointment at 715-485-8500.

Where can I find more information?

- On the web at www.flu.gov or www.polkcountyhealthdepartment.org and click on the Immunizations page
- Polk County Health Department at 715-485-8500

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