

Protection from the flu

If you've seen the ads and promptings to get the flu shot, and haven't done so already, make it part of your fall wellness plan and do it today. Here are some facts that may help you understand how important it is to get vaccinated.

You protect yourself from at least one week in bed, and sometimes two. Wouldn't you rather use your vacation days to, um, actually take a vacation? And what if that nasty virus pounces on you during the holidays? Bye-bye celebrations.

You protect those in your family, and friends you like to hang out with, from the same issue.

You protect people who are vulnerable to catching flu. Older people, young children and babies, and people whose immune systems are compromised can get the flu shot but may not build up the type of immunity to it that they need to fight it properly, like healthy people can. Then in comes you, who says you "never get sick" so you see no reason to get vaccinated. And though your body is doing an okay job of fighting off the flu, these vulnerable people won't be able to.

Think of this fact: It takes from 1 to 4 days for symptoms to show up once you've caught the virus. Adults can be contagious from the day before symptoms begin *through 5 to 10 days after* the illness starts. What this means is that **you could be infectious and not even know it**. Meanwhile, you're kissing that baby, hugging your grandma, putting your hand on that doorknob, and guess who's getting that virus passed on to them?

The average number of Americans **hospitalized** each year because of secondary infections and other issues related to flu is 200,000. The number of people who **die** from flu-related causes in the US is 3,000 to 49,000.

Okay, it is possible to treat the flu. Within 48 hours of coming down with symptoms, you can go to your healthcare provider (if you can get in your car and drive) and get antiviral medicine that will help. It's not going to get rid of it entirely. But it will lessen the time that you're curled up on the couch, watching Hallmark movies because you're too ill to change the channel and you feel like you're dying.

So wouldn't it be easier to just go in and get the shot? If you don't want to do it for yourself, do it for your family, your friends, your workmates, and for those who are vulnerable.

