

Fact vs. Fiction

Fiction: The flu shot can give me the flu.

Fact: You can't get the flu from the flu shot. The injectable vaccine is made either from killed viruses that can't cause the flu or without flu viruses altogether. People who get sick after receiving a flu shot were going to get sick anyway. It takes about two weeks for a flu shot to be effective.

Fiction: I'm pretty healthy so I don't need a flu shot.

Fact: Even healthy people can get and spread the flu. The flu can cause serious health problems, especially for those who already have a chronic illness or are too young to be vaccinated. If you catch and spread the flu to someone, it can cause a potentially life-threatening health problem, especially in those at high risk for complications.

Fiction: The flu isn't a big deal. Besides, you can't do anything about it anyway.

Fact: While it's especially important for people who have a chronic illness to get the flu shot, anyone – even healthy people – can benefit from being vaccinated. Current CDC guidelines recommend yearly vaccination against influenza for everyone older than 6 months of age.

Fiction: I was vaccinated against the flu years ago so I don't need a flu shot.

Fact: Strains of flu viruses typically change each year, so there is a new flu shot each year. It is important to make sure you have immunity to the strains most likely to cause an outbreak. Even if you got a flu shot last year, you should still get one this year.

Fiction: Flu shots don't work.

Fact: Vaccine effectiveness can vary. However, recent studies show that the flu vaccine significantly reduces the risk of flu when most circulating flu viruses are like the vaccine viruses. Even when there's not a good strain match, the vaccination can still help offer some protection such as a milder case of the flu.