

MYTHBUSTERS. The flu vaccine is available on the NHS from community pharmacies for adults who are considered "at risk".

Here are 8 common flu myths and the truth behind them.

MYTH 1. Flu is just like having a heavy cold

A bad bout of flu is much worse than a heavy cold. Flu symptoms come on suddenly and sometimes severely. They include fever, chills, headaches and aching muscles, as well as a cough and sore throat.

You're likely to spend 2 or 3 days in bed. If you get complications caused by flu, you could become seriously ill and have to go to hospital.

MYTH 2. The flu vaccine gives you flu

No, it doesn't. The injected flu vaccine given to adults contains inactivated flu viruses, so it can't give you flu.

Your arm may feel a bit sore where you were injected, and some people get a slight temperature and aching muscles for a couple of days afterwards. Other reactions are very rare.

MYTH 3. Once you've had the flu vaccine, you're protected for life

No, you aren't. The viruses that cause flu can change every year, so you need a vaccination that matches the new viruses each year. The vaccine usually provides protection for the duration of that year's flu season.

MYTH 4. I'm pregnant, so I shouldn't have the flu jab because it will affect my baby

You should have the vaccine no matter what stage of pregnancy you're in. If you're pregnant, you could get very ill if you get flu, which could also be bad for your baby.

Having the jab can also protect your baby against flu after they're born and during the early months of life.

MYTH 5. I've had the flu already this autumn, so I don't need the vaccination this year

Yes you do need it if you're in one of the "at risk" groups.

As flu is caused by several viruses, the immunity you naturally developed will only protect you against one of them – you could go on to catch another strain, so it's recommended you have the jab even if you've recently had flu. Also, what you thought was flu could have been something else.

MYTH 6. It's late into Autumn, it's too late to have it later in the year

No, it's not too late. It's better to have the flu vaccine as soon as it becomes available, usually in October, but it's always worth getting vaccinated after this, even if there have already been outbreaks of flu.

MYTH 7. Flu can be treated with antibiotics

No, it can't. Flu is caused by viruses – antibiotics only work against bacteria. You may be prescribed antiviral medicines to treat your flu.

Antivirals do not cure flu, but they can make you less infectious to others and reduce the length of time you may be ill.

To be effective, antivirals have to be given within a day or 2 of your symptoms appearing. A bacterial infection may occur as a result of having the flu, in which case you may be given antibiotics.

MYTH 8. Vitamin C can prevent flu

No, it can't. Many people think that taking daily vitamin C supplements will stop them getting flu, but there's no evidence to prove this.

Keep up to date about flu and winter health
<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/10-myths-about-flu-and-the-flu-vaccine/>

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