Why Should I Get Vaccinated against Influenza?

More than 1,500 people in Minnesota were hospitalized and 3 children died of complications from influenza during the 2015–2016 influenza season. Many people choose not to get vaccinated against influenza for various reasons. Unfortunately, many of these reasons are based on misinformation.

Learn the facts about why getting vaccinated against influenza is important for your health and the health of the community.

Myth: “I’m healthy. I won’t get influenza.”

Facts:
• The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends influenza vaccine for everyone 6 months and older, not just for people who are older or who have chronic illnesses.
• Anyone can get influenza—even healthy, strong young people. Influenza can be very serious and even cause death.
• Influenza vaccine is recommended for pregnant women. Even if you are healthy, pregnancy increases your risk for complications from influenza. Influenza vaccine given during pregnancy protects you and your baby.
• Some people infected with influenza experience mild symptoms or no symptoms. You could infect other people and not know it. Older adults and people with chronic diseases or weakened immune systems are especially at risk.

You can spread influenza and infect others 1 day before your influenza symptoms develop and up to 5 days after symptoms appear.

Myth: “I’m not convinced the influenza vaccine even works.”

Facts:
• Influenza vaccine is not 100 percent effective. Some people who get vaccinated still get influenza. Typically, though, the illness is milder.
• The most effective strategy for protecting yourself and others from influenza is vaccination.
• The influenza vaccine works best in younger, healthy individuals.
• Older adults and people with chronic diseases or weakened immune systems typically do not respond as well to the vaccine and are at increased risk for serious complications if exposed to influenza. So people who live with or care for individuals at increased risk need to get vaccinated to protect them.
• Getting vaccinated is not just about you. It is about protecting other people, too.

continued
Myth:  
“I’m concerned about side effects from the vaccine.”

Facts:  
• Over the last 50 years, injectable influenza vaccines—the “flu shot”—have had very good safety records. Hundreds of millions of people in the United States have safely received influenza vaccines.  
• The flu shot that Park Nicollet usually gives does not contain the preservative thimerosal  
• Serious side effects are extremely rare  
• Mild side effects from the flu shot include:  
  » Soreness at injection site  
  » Mild fever  
  » Muscle aches

Myth:  
“I’m concerned about getting influenza from the vaccine.”

Facts:  
• Influenza vaccines cannot cause influenza because the viruses are killed or weakened  
• People mistakenly think they got “the flu” from the vaccine, when in fact they may have been exposed to influenza viruses before they were vaccinated  
• People often think any illness with fever, cold symptoms, vomiting and diarrhea is the flu

Call Park Nicollet at 952-993-2121 to schedule a nurse appointment for influenza vaccine. Most health insurance providers cover the cost of influenza vaccine. If you have any questions or concerns about influenza vaccine, talk to your clinician.