

Flu season is here: get vaccinated now!

By ACSH Staff — October 3, 2014



Flu season is considered to begin in October and last until as

late as May. However, the peak of flu season does not usually occur until January or February. [According to](#) ^[1] the United States influenza surveillance system, a collaboration between the CDC and other federal, state, local and territorial partners, from May 18th to September 20th of this year, the United States experienced low levels of seasonal flu activity, which is typical of this generally winter-focused contagion.

With the height of flu season still a few months off, now is the ideal time to get the flu vaccine, as this is the best method for preventing flu. It is recommended that everyone six months of age and older get the vaccine. Because the flu can be [especially dangerous](#) ^[2] for seniors, there is a high dose option with four times the amount of antigen available for those ages 65 years and older. And [the vaccine is not only safe](#) ^[3] for pregnant women, but [studies have shown](#) ^[4] that women getting the protection have better outcomes for both themselves and their newborns.

The vaccine is composed of antigens (immunogenic proteins) from three or four different influenza viruses, and even during seasons when the vaccine is not exactly matched to the most common strain of flu circulating, the vaccine can often protect against severe complications from the flu, including hospitalization and death.

Last year, [only 46 percent of Americans](#) ^[5] got the flu shot, with the lowest rates of vaccination seen in those ages 18 to 34. Yet, the flu causes thousands of deaths every year.

ACSH's Ariel Savransky says, There is no reason that you should not get the flu vaccine. Even though it is not 100 percent effective, there is really no downside to vaccination. Doctors and health professionals should urge patients to get the vaccine in order to prevent millions of serious illnesses and thousands of deaths this flu season.

ACSH's Dr. Gilbert Ross adds, If you need another reason to get the vaccine, consider this: New York City's healthcare workers have unacceptably low rates of flu vaccination, so you may want to take extra precautions to stay away from the hospital.

Read his op-ed in *The New York Post* advocating mandatory flu vaccination for healthcare workers [here](#)

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Links

[1] http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6339a3.htm?s_cid=mm6339a3_w

[2] <http://acsh.org/2014/09/flu-shot-options-seniors/>

[3] <http://acsh.org/2013/12/flu-vaccine-averts-millions-illnesses-pregnant-women-still-reluctant-cost-babies/>

[4] <http://acsh.org/2014/02/flu-vaccinations-necessity-pregnant-women/>

[5] <http://acsh.org/2014/09/mandatory-flu-vaccine-healthcare-workers-debate-rages/>

[6] <http://acsh.org/2014/08/nyc-hospitals-dont-make-health-workers-get-vaccinated/>