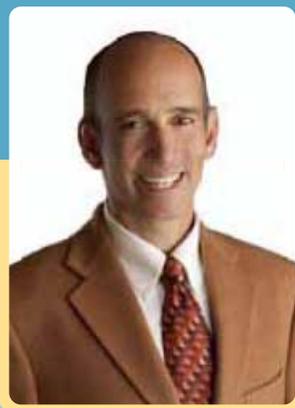


Forget the Flu Shot, Here's How You REALLY Prevent the Flu

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Forget the Flu Shot, Here's How You REALLY Prevent the Flu

I have never received a flu shot. I have also not missed a day of work due to illness in well over 20 years. Yet if you listen to just about any news program or public health agency during flu season in the United States -- which, by the way, can begin as early as October and extend as late as May -- you would think anyone who did NOT get a flu shot was destined to be laid up with the flu for weeks.

Well, I'm here to tell you that this is not the case. Not only could getting a flu shot still leave you vulnerable to the flu, but it could actually increase your risk of getting it (I'll explain why later).

If you have never gotten a flu shot, here's to hoping you continue your trend. If you routinely get them, the information in the pages to follow may make you change your mind.

What is "the Flu"?

The infamous "flu," also known as influenza, that everyone tries to avoid during the winter is a respiratory illness caused by flu viruses. The virus can travel from person to person in droplets from coughs or sneezes, either through the air or on your hands or other objects.

Contrary to popular belief, nausea and vomiting are not the trademark symptoms of the flu (even though vomiting is often described as "stomach flu"). Stomach ailments like vomiting, nausea, and diarrhea can be part of the flu, especially in children, but the most common symptoms are as follows:

- High fever
- Extreme fatigue and headache
- Muscle aches
- Sore throat and dry cough
- Runny or stuffy nose

Now, the flu can make you feel lousy. But realize that most people get over it in a few days, and certainly feel better after two weeks.

Those people who are at risk of dying from the flu, or of developing complications such as pneumonia, bronchitis, or sinus and ear infections, are those who are already sick and have compromised immune systems.



According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), “The best way to prevent the flu is by getting a flu vaccination each year.”¹



In reality, preventing the flu has nothing to do with a shot, and everything to do with the lifestyle choices you make. Still, the CDC recommends flu shots for the following “high risk” groups:

- Children aged 6 months until their 5th birthday
- Pregnant women
- People 50 years of age and older
- People of any age with certain chronic medical conditions
- People who live in nursing homes and other long term care facilities

People who live with, or care for, those in the groups above are also on the CDC’s recommended vaccination list.

It appears, however, that some of you in the medical field are beginning to catch on to the ineffectiveness and risks surrounding flu vaccines, because less than 40 percent of health care workers got flu shots according to a 2006 study.²

The reasons why the workers opted to *not* get vaccinated were right on:

- They didn't believe the vaccine would work
- They believed their immune systems were strong enough to withstand exposure to the flu
- They were concerned about side effects

I suspect that no one would get a flu shot if they suspected it didn't work. Yet, there is a very real chance that your flu shot will be ineffective.

Flu Shots do NOT Prevent the Flu

One of the key groups to which flu vaccines are pushed, the elderly, is perhaps the most misled of all. The majority of people who die from the flu, according to the CDC, are the elderly, therefore public health agencies urge everyone over the age of 50 to get a flu shot.

You may be surprised to learn, however, that flu vaccines have *never been proven to prevent flu-related deaths in people over age 65.*

That's right. A study in the *Lancet*,³ released October 2007, found that NO existing studies have conclusively proven that flu shots prevent flu-related deaths among the

elderly.

In fact, back in 2005 a similar study published in the *Archives of Internal Medicine*⁴ found that flu shots prevent far fewer deaths in the elderly than previously thought.

That report highlighted that although immunization rates in the elderly (people over 65) increased 50 percent in the past 20 years, there has not been a consequent decline in flu-related deaths.

Yet you don't hear about these findings in the media, or at your local pharmacy, which surely is promoting its upcoming flu shot clinics to anyone who will have them.

Why doesn't the flu shot always work to prevent the flu? There is evidence that flu vaccines are less effective in older people because the elderly have lower immune activity. But the key problem has to do with the way flu vaccines work.

The Problems With Flu Vaccines

There are two types of flu vaccine, the flu shot (which contains a dead "inactivated" virus) and the nasal-spray version (which contains a live virus), both of which operate on the premise that they cause antibodies to develop in your body that will protect you against being infected with an influenza virus.

The problem here, and it is a major one, is that the flu vaccines are only effective against three strains of the virus.

Each year, the World Health Organization (WHO), the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and the CDC collect samples of flu viruses and, based on flu activity and other factors, select three viruses (two subtypes of influenza A viruses and one influenza B virus) to be used in the current year's flu vaccines.

However, flu viruses are constantly changing, and there's no way to know whether the agencies will choose the exact strains that may infect you.

During the 2003-2004 flu season, for instance, the CDC announced that the flu vaccine had "no or low effectiveness" against influenza or influenza-like illness. Depending on how the data were analyzed, the vaccine protected from *zero percent to 14 percent* of study participants that year.⁵

So please listen up: You can still get the flu, even if you get a flu shot.



It even says so right on the CDC's own Web site:

*"The ability of flu vaccine to protect a person depends on two things: 1) the age and health status of the person getting the vaccine, and 2) the similarity or "match" between the virus strains in the vaccine and those in circulation."*⁶



A 2006 study in the *British Medical Journal*⁷ (BMJ) also found that the benefits of flu vaccines have been exaggerated by medical experts.

The report found that the only accurate way to judge the real worth of vaccines was through systematic reviews. When these were done, scientists discovered flu vaccines had little impact on:

- Mortality rates
- Time away from work
- Hospital stays for healthy patients under age 65

Also consider the results of two studies in the Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews:

- A review of 51 studies involving nearly 264,000 children found that inactivated flu shots were *similar in effectiveness to placebos* in children under 2.⁸
- After reviewing 48 reports involving adults, the researchers concluded, "There is not enough evidence to decide whether routine vaccination to prevent influenza in healthy adults is effective."

Their report found "vaccinations against influenza avoided 80% of cases at best ... but only 50% when the vaccine did not match, and 30% against influenza-like illness, in healthy adults. *It did not change the number of people needing to go to hospital or take time off work.*"⁹

There is also little evidence on the safety of flu vaccines. According to the BMJ report:

"The optimistic and confident tone of some predictions of viral [flu] circulation and of the impact of inactivated vaccines, which are at odds with the evidence, is striking.

The reasons are probably complex and may involve a messy blend of truth conflicts and conflicts of interest making it difficult to separate factual disputes from value disputes, or a manifestation of optimism bias (an unwarranted belief in

the efficacy of interventions).”

Further, keep in mind that flu shots do not protect you from colds and other respiratory illnesses, which often have similar symptoms as the flu, and may, in fact, be mistaken for the flu.

What's in That Vaccine Vial or Spray? Flu Vaccine Additives

Aside from the flu virus itself, there are many other additives that make up flu vaccinations. Following is a partial list of additives that can be found in vaccines:



- Thimerosal (a mercury derivative)
- Ethylene glycol (antifreeze)
- Phenol (a disinfectant dye)
- Aluminum
- Benzethonium chloride (a disinfectant)
- Formaldehyde (a preservative and disinfectant)
- Chick embryos

None of these additives are things you should be injecting into your body. Interestingly, Jock Doubleday, director of the California non-profit corporation Natural Woman, Natural Man, Inc., has offered \$75,000 to the first medical doctor or pharmaceutical company CEO who publicly drinks a mixture of standard vaccine additives. There have been no takers, even though the offer has been increased by \$5,000 per month since it began.

If no one has accepted by January 1, 2008, the offer will increase to \$115,000, but I doubt that will be far too low to actually prompt someone to drink the chemical cocktail.

The vaccine additive that has gotten the most press is thimerosal, which contains approximately 49 percent ethylmercury. The mercury in thimerosal is a known neurotoxin to which children and fetuses are extremely vulnerable.

Studies have indicated that incredibly tiny concentrations of thimerosal induced:

- DNA strand breaks
- Membrane damage
- Cell death¹⁰

Thimerosal has also been linked to autism. Studies of two government databases indicate that autism rates went up as thimerosal dosages increased, then began to decline as thimerosal was removed.¹¹

In July 1999, the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Public Health Service agencies agreed that thimerosal should be reduced or eliminated from vaccines because of the potential risks.

However, while the additive has been removed from most pediatric vaccines, it has not been removed from the flu vaccine.

According to the CDC:

“The majority of influenza vaccines distributed in the United States currently contain thimerosal as a preservative. However, some contain only trace amounts of thimerosal and are considered by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to be preservative-free... Thimerosal preservative-free influenza vaccines are available, but in limited quantities.”¹²

Flu Vaccines Cause Flu-Like Side Effects

If you receive a flu shot, what can you expect? Symptoms that feel like the flu. According to the CDC, side effects from the inactivated flu shot include:

- Soreness, redness, or swelling where the shot was given
- Fever (low grade)
- Aches

The live-virus vaccine (marketed under the name FluMist), on the other hand, can cause:

- Cough, wheezing and runny nose
- Sore throat
- Headache
- Vomiting
- Muscle aches
- Fever



Either vaccine can also cause allergic reactions, and some vaccines cause other very rare serious harms such as transient paralysis.¹³

To date, one study has also found an association between flu vaccines and Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS),¹⁴ which causes muscles weakness and sometimes paralysis. In 1976, vaccination for the swine flu -- a flu pandemic that never materialized -- resulted in hundreds of Guillain-Barré Syndrome paralysis victims as well as countless deaths.

Flu Deaths in the United States are Greatly Exaggerated

Every fall, health agencies begin prompting fear in the minds of Americans as they talk about all of the countless flu-related deaths that will occur during the upcoming flu season. One might go so far as to call this a scare tactic, because it sends millions of people to their doctor or pharmacy practically begging for a flu shot.

You may be shocked to learn that **the CDC actually grossly distorts the facts about flu deaths.**

If you go to the CDC's main flu page, you'll see their statistic that about 36,000 people die from the flu in the United States each year. Meanwhile, they say from 5 percent to 20 percent of the U.S. population gets the flu each year, and more than 200,000 people are hospitalized from flu complications.¹⁵

But if you search a little harder, you can find the actual number of people who died from the flu in 2005, according to preliminary data (this is the most recent data that's available).

Want to take a guess at what it is?

In 2005, 1,806 people died from influenza, not 36,000. And in 2004, there were just 1,100 flu deaths.¹⁶

The statistics the CDC gives are skewed partly because they classify those dying from pneumonia as dying from the flu, which is not at all true or accurate. For instance, their 2005 statistics lump influenza and pneumonia deaths together, at 62,804 deaths.



But, broken down, there were 60,998 deaths from pneumonia and just 1,806 from the flu.

Nonetheless, U.S. flu vaccine manufacturers estimate that up to 132 million doses of flu vaccine will be available in the United States during the 2007-2008 flu season. This is *the most flu vaccine ever distributed* in the United States during a single flu season.¹⁷

And with flu vaccines costing anywhere from \$15 to \$35 a pop depending on where you live... well, you do the math. There is obviously much to gain from encouraging everyone in the United States to get a flu vaccine, and much to lose if they don't -- for the pharmaceutical companies.

How to Prevent the Flu Naturally

Getting the flu is not fun, and for some groups of people it can indeed be very serious, even life threatening. So you should definitely take proper steps to avoid getting it.

However, for most people the flu shot does not make you healthy; instead it weakens your immune system and does just the opposite, which is make you less healthy.

When I would see patients with a case of the flu, I would always question them as to how their diet, sleep, and stresses were going, because it was nearly always one of these factors that were off balance and contributing to their illness.

If you follow a healthy lifestyle, you will not have to worry about getting the flu, plain and simple. The key steps that I follow to stay flu-free, which I suggest you follow too, include:

1. Eat right for your nutritional type, including avoiding sugar.



The foods that are ideal for your nutritional type are also those that will keep your body functioning at its highest level. Base your diet on them, and your immune system will be in full force. And, of course, your strong immune system is key to fighting off viruses and other illness, including the flu.

If you eat a lot of processed foods and sugar, however, your immune system will suffer. Sugar decreases the function of your immune system almost immediately.

It is especially imperative to avoid sugar if you feel you are coming down with something, but keeping sugar out of your diet for the long haul will do wonders for your health and make your body stronger, which will make it harder for the flu to bother you.

You can find out more about nutritional typing at www.Mercola.com.

2. Get plenty of sunshine or vitamin D.

In April 2005, an influenza epidemic started sweeping through the maximum-security hospital for the criminally insane where Dr. John Cannell worked.

As the epidemic progressed, he noticed something unusual: although wards all around him became infected, no patients on his ward became ill, despite intermingling of both patients and nurses.

The only difference was that all of the patients on Dr. Cannell's ward had been taking 2,000 units of vitamin D every day for several months or longer.

Shortly after the epidemic, a paper in the journal Nature showed that vitamin D was a potent antibiotic, working by increasing the body's production of proteins called antimicrobial peptides. Antimicrobial peptides destroy the cell walls of bacteria, fungi, and viruses, including the influenza virus.

The BEST way to get your vitamin D is from safe sun exposure every day. Spending up to an hour in the sun each day is not an unreasonable goal.

However, many of you will be challenged to get out in the sun during the winter in the United States for five minutes a day, let alone an hour, so your next best option is vitamin D3 (cholecalciferol), which is the same vitamin D your body makes when exposed to sunshine.



Please be aware that there is a risk of overdosing if you get your vitamin D in supplement form. In fact, I would not recommend using them at all unless you monitor your blood levels of vitamin D by regularly getting a (25(OH)D) blood test.

For more important information about vitamin D, sunshine, and your health, check out the Mercola.com Special Report *Over a Million People Die EVERY Year From Lack of Sun Exposure*, available now on www.Mercola.com.

3. Optimize Your Omega-3 Fats

Your immune system can't possibly fight infections effectively if you aren't receiving optimal doses of the animal-based omega-3 fats DHA and EPA. Research has shown that these omega-3 fats support your immune system and provide greater resistance to common illnesses such as the flu.

Traditionally, you could get these healthy omega-3 fats from eating clean sources of seafood. However, pollution, including industrial pollutants and toxins like mercury, PCBs, heavy metals and radioactive poisons, has contaminated most seafood on the planet.

While there are a few sources of high-quality fish left, such as small fish like sardines and salmon from Alaska, they are either not palatable to many people, or they are not easy to find.

This is why I recommend that you get your omega-3 fats from krill oil. Krill are small shrimp or prawn-like creatures, and their oil is high in the vital compounds EPA and

DHA, but is purified so you don't have to worry about any pollutants. Just make sure you choose a high-quality brand that contains genuine neptune processed krill.

4. Exercise regularly.

When you exercise you increase your circulation and your blood flow throughout your body. The components of your immune system are also better circulated, which means your immune system has a better chance of finding an illness before it has a chance to spread.

Exercising helps your immune system to be more efficient in weeding out and acting upon viruses and diseases.

5. Get adequate sleep.

Just like it becomes harder for you to get your daily tasks done if you're tired, if your body is overly fatigued it will be harder for it to fight the flu. Regular rest will keep you strong and ensure that your body has the strength to fight off any potential invaders.

6. Address your emotional stress.

It has been estimated that up to 90 percent of illness and disease is stress-related. Simply put, stress wears you down emotionally and physically. Being under too much of it, for too long, is like opening the floodgates for any invader to enter your body. Your defenses will just be too weak to keep them out.

My favorite, and most highly recommended, form of stress relief is the Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT), which is a type of psychological acupressure. You can learn more about it at www.Mercola.com, and you can also try other methods of stress management such as meditation, yoga, prayer, journaling, or other methods.

7. Wash your hands regularly.

This one is simple, but often overlooked. Washing your hands will decrease your likelihood of spreading a virus to your nose or mouth (where it can enter your body) or to other people. Children especially need to be reminded to wash their hands, as they often put them in, or near, their mouths.

The best hand-washing technique involves three steps:

- Use warm water
- Work up a good lather all the way up to your wrists for at least 10 or 15 seconds
- Don't forget to get all surfaces including



the backs of your hands, wrists, between your fingers and an area often overlooked, your fingernails

So there you have it. A simple plan to stay healthy this flu season that does not involve any type of substance that you inject or inhale.

Keep these recommendations handy, and refer to them often. Most of all, stick to them, and you and your family can bid the flu a fond farewell.

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