

Flu 101: What You Need to Know About Flu

What is the Flu?

Seasonal influenza (flu) is a serious, contagious respiratory illness caused by flu viruses. Flu is transmitted via respiratory droplets spread through coughing, sneezing and talking. Flu can also be contracted by touching a surface or object that has the flu virus on it, and then touching the mouth, eyes or nose. Getting the flu vaccine is the best protection against the flu.^{1,2}

The flu is serious:

- Approximately 5-20% of Americans get the flu each year.¹
- More than 200,000 Americans are hospitalized each year because of flu-related ailments.¹
- Thousands of people die each year from flu-related complications.²

Why Should College Students Get Vaccinated?

- Everyone is at risk of contracting seasonal influenza, but college students are at a particularly high risk of getting and spreading the flu because of exposure to high-touch areas like common living spaces and classrooms, and through social activities. Flu vaccination is associated with reductions in illness, use of health care services, and work and school absenteeism, and a lower risk for impaired academic performance.³
- Flu viruses change from year to year, so flu vaccines are updated from one season to the next to provide protection against those strains research indicates may be most common during that year's flu season. A person's immune protection from the flu vaccine declines over time. Annual vaccination is needed for optimal protection.⁴

Where Can College Students Get Vaccinated?

Flu vaccines are offered in many locations. In addition to doctors' offices, students can get a flu vaccine at campus health centers and other health clinics, retail stores and pharmacies. For specific locations, visit vaccine.healthmap.org to find where flu vaccinations are being offered.

How Can College Students Learn About the Importance of Flu Vaccination?

To help educate college students about the importance of protecting themselves against the flu and encourage vaccination, a collaboration of flu stakeholders, including bioCSL Inc., Families Fighting Flu and Alana's Foundation – two nonprofit organizations of families who have lost children to, or whose children have suffered serious health complications due to the flu – launched a Public Service Announcement (PSA).

The PSA follows Seth, a college student whose mom shadows him throughout his daily routine. As Seth prepares for a big night out, mom shakes off some of his bad habits, but when his date appears at the door with the sniffles, mom puts her foot down, asking Seth, "Did you get your flu vaccine?" To watch the PSA and share it with others visit [YouTube](#).

Where Can Students Find More Information About the Flu?

- Department of Health and Human Services: flu.gov
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: cdc.gov/flu
- Families Fighting Flu: familiesfightingflu.org

References:

1. Seasonal Flu. U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Available at: http://www.flu.gov/about_the_flu/seasonal/index.html. Accessed September 30, 2014.
2. Key Facts about Influenza (Flu) & Flu Vaccine. U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Available at: <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/keyfacts.htm>. Accessed September 30, 2014.
3. Kristin L. Nichol, MD, MPH, MBA; Sarah D'Heilly, MD, MPH; Edward P. Ehlinger, MD, MSPH. Influenza Vaccination Among College and University Students Impact on Influenzalike Illness, Health Care Use, and Impaired School Performance. Arch Pediatr Adolesc Med. 2008;162(12):1113-1118. DOI: [10.1001/archpedi.162.12.1113](https://doi.org/10.1001/archpedi.162.12.1113).
4. No More Excuses: You Need a Flu Vaccine. U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Available at: <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/pdf/freeresources/general/no-excuses-flu-vaccine.pdf>. Accessed October 23, 2014.