

Don't Delay; Get Your Flu Vaccine Today!

So, you don't like shots. Most people don't care for getting a shot, but if you had to choose between a two-second sting or two weeks of misery with the flu, which one would you choose?

This year, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), along with many experts in the field of infectious disease, are highly recommending that everyone get a flu vaccine. Even if you got one last year, you will need a new one this year due to the ability of the flu virus to constantly change form. Although you may have developed antibodies against last year's flu, chances are you are not immune to this year's flu virus.

Have you ever wondered why such a big deal is made over the flu virus? The flu, scientifically referred to as the Influenza Virus, has some unique characteristics. Here are some basics about the flu virus. Flu viruses are classified as type A, B or C based on their protein make-up. Type A flu is the most frightening of the three. Experts believe that type A was responsible for the global outbreaks of 1918, 1957 and 1968. Thousands of people perished during these outbreaks. Today, however, scientists are able to predict which flu strain will circulate during the upcoming flu season. This allows for proper vaccine development so that your body can develop antibodies to fight the current form of flu if it invades your body.

How Influenza Viruses Change Form: *Drift & Shift*

The unique characteristic of type A influenza is its ability to change form. These changes may be small and continuous or large and abrupt. Both type A and B influenza make small, continuous changes. This is called Antigenic Drift. The drifting occurs frequently enough to make the new, changed strains unrecognizable to your immune system. Antigenic shift happens when two different flu strains infect the same cell and exchange genetic material. This results in a newly created type A flu.

The protein combination of this A type of flu is typically not seen in humans for many years at a time. Because people have little or no existing immunity to it, the occurrence of this strain of virulent flu tends to cause severe outbreaks, both community and state-wide (*referred to as an epidemic*), and if it's able to easily spread from one person to the next, possibly worldwide (*known as a pandemic*). This is why a new flu vaccine is developed each year and why it is necessary that you are vaccinated annually. Otherwise, your immune system would not recognize the newly formed virus.

QuickTakes



Steps To Take If You Get The Flu

- Get plenty of rest.
- Drink lots of liquids.
- Consider taking over-the-counter medications to relieve the symptoms.
- Stay home. Avoid contact with others to protect them against the virus.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing and sneezing.
- Wash your hands often, especially before touching shared surfaces.
- If symptoms worsen, see your doctor.

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Don't Delay!

Your best defense against the influenza virus is getting the flu vaccine every year. The best time to get it is from early October to mid-November. The vaccine may be given at any point during the season, but it takes your immune system about two weeks to develop the antibodies against the virus. Therefore, the earlier you get it, the better.

There are two vaccine options available: The flu injection and the flu nasal-spray, called FluMist. Both vaccines are a mixture of influenza viruses expected to circulate that season. The injection consists of inactivated, or dead, flu viruses. It may leave some soreness where the injection is given and a possible low-grade temperature. Some minor muscle aches may also occur following the injection.

The FluMist consists of weakened flu viruses. Only healthy persons ages 5-49 years old may receive the FluMist. The safety of the FluMist has not been established in the elderly or persons with chronic medical conditions, such as asthma. Some minor side effects may occur similar to those following the injection. Getting the vaccine is not full proof. In other words, you may still get the flu, but if you have been vaccinated, the severity of symptoms and length of time you have it can be greatly reduced.

You should NOT get the flu shot if...

- You are allergic to eggs or any component of the vaccine (*the viral material in flu vaccines is grown in eggs*).
- You have a history of Guillain-Barre Syndrome.
- You have an acute illness or fever. (*Wait until you are feeling better before getting the vaccine*).
- You are in your first 3 months of pregnancy.

If you have concerns or questions, talk with your doctor before receiving the flu shot.

You should NOT get the FluMist if...

- You have a history of certain lung conditions, including asthma and heart conditions.
- You have metabolic disorders, such as diabetes or renal dysfunction.
- You have immunodeficiency diseases or are on immunosuppressive treatment.
- You have Guillain-Barre Syndrome.
- You are pregnant.
- You have a history of allergy or hypersensitivity, including anaphylaxis, to any or part of the FluMist.

Chicken & Rice Soup with Mushroom Croutons | Makes: 4 servings

Ingredients:

- 2 tsp. canola oil
- 2 cups coarsely diced mushrooms
- 4 cups de-fatted chicken broth, divided
- 1/4 cup finely chopped onion
- 1 small carrot, thinly sliced
- 1 small rib celery, thinly sliced
- 1 cup diced, cooked chicken breast
- 1/2 cup cooked brown rice
- 1/2 cup cooked wild rice
- Salt and freshly ground pepper



Nutritional Information (per serving):

178 Calories; 5g Fat

Preparation:

1. In a medium non-stick skillet, heat oil over medium-high heat. Sauté mushrooms until they give up their liquid, *about 6 minutes*. Raise heat and cook mushrooms, stirring often, until browned and slightly dry, *about 12 minutes*. Set aside.
2. In a large, deep saucepan, use 1/4 cup broth to sauté onion, carrots and celery over medium-high heat for 1 minute. Reduce heat, cover tightly and cook gently until vegetables are crisp-tender, *about 7 minutes*.
3. Add rest of chicken broth, cooked chicken and brown and wild rice. Cook until heated through. If desired, season to taste with salt and pepper.
4. To serve, divide soup among 4 soup bowls. Garnish each with mushroom "croutons" and serve.