

IMPORTANT TO DISPEL MYTHS ABOUT FLU VACCINE: ALAM

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said, adding that those who get the vaccine are protected about 70 per cent of the time.

"It keeps priming your immune system each year," she added.

What are the different types of vaccines?

There are two major types of flu vaccines on the market, Alam said.

The trivalent vaccine covers three strains of the flu virus and the quadrivalent, recommended for seniors and high-risk groups, covers four strains.

The quadrivalent vaccine is particularly designed to target a declining immune system.

What are the most common side effects of getting the vaccine?

Most often, people who get the influenza vaccine will simply experience a sore arm, Alam said. However, she adds, certain

people may feel unwell for a few days as their immune system is being primed.

"It takes about seven days for the shot to fully take maximal effect," she added.

What are the most serious complications linked to the vaccine?

Alam says Guillain-Barré syndrome has been associated with the flu shot, though the chance of a person getting the syndrome is extremely rare. The syndrome causes a person's immune system to attack their nerve cells, causing muscle weakness.

"It's so rare and it's a self-limited illness that goes away on its own, but people do have to go to the hospital if they feel incredibly weak, especially if they find it difficult to walk, to get the support they need until the syndrome passes," she said.

Another rare side effect



Number of Laboratory Confirmed Influenza Cases

Age group	Number of cases for 2017-2018 season	Number of cases for 2016-2017 season
0-4	96	73
5-12	59	36
13-18	17	20
19-44	50	33
45-64	86	58
65+	391	258
	Total: 699	Total: 478

Source: Halton Region Health Department

to the vaccine is anaphylaxis, Alam added.

How is the flu shot distributed to different areas around Ontario?

The vaccines are distributed by Public Health Ontario to local health care providers based on uptake in that particular area, Alam said, adding

that this rate varies from neighbourhood to neighbourhood.

"You want to try to balance the needs of the neighbourhood with the availability of the flu shot."

What are the most common myths associated with the flu shot?

Alam says she most often hears people saying that the flu shot doesn't work, or that they do not require a vaccine because they never get the flu.

"They don't realize that it's kind of a matter of random luck and also a side benefit of the herd immunity that everyone else is

THE STORY BEHIND THE STORY

It's important to dispel the myths of the dangers of the flu vaccine, which saves untold number of lives each year.

providing them," she said. "Because if everyone else gets the flu shot, then they are protected, too. This is the solidarity piece."

Alam says by and large, the flu shot has worked pretty well over the last decade or so to prevent any major epidemic.

"I have seen it save lives and that is why I highly recommend it," she said. "These deaths from the flu, these hospitalizations from the flu, major illnesses from the flu (are preventable). Even for a young healthy person, missing a week or two of work is a huge deal for people who have to pay their mortgages or take care of their parents and their kids. There are a number of reasons why getting a flu shot just makes sense."

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