

# **Safety Meeting Topic**

## **Seasonal Flu Prevention**

**December, 2008**

### **PLEASE MAKE SURE YOU GET YOUR SEASONAL FLU VACCINATION!**

Every year 36,000 people in the United States die of seasonal flu. If you are one of the people who has chosen to NOT get vaccinated, please remember that if you get the flu, you might give it to someone who dies from it. It could be an elderly relative, a young child, someone who works with you who is immune compromised, or someone who just isn't healthy enough at the time to survive it.

The Top Five Excuses People Use:

1) *The last time I got a flu shot, I got the flu from the vaccination.*

**NOT TRUE!** The flu shot has no live virus in it – you can't get infected with the flu virus from the shot. You CAN feel sort of yucky and sick, because a vaccination is intended to make your immune system respond to the proteins in the vaccination. When your immune system responds, your body makes a substance called "interferon", and that substance can make you feel yucky. It's a good sign, because it means your immune system is building a defense against the flu virus. That way, when you come in contact with the virus, your immune system already has an arsenal ready to fight off the flu.

The nasal spray form of the vaccine does contain live virus, but it is a weakened virus. However, a very low percentage of those who receive this vaccine strain do become sick with a very mild case (the virus is weaker than the ones circulating through the population).

2) *Last year I got a vaccination, and a few months later I got the flu anyway.*

**COULD BE TRUE.** The scientists who make the vaccine have to try to "guess" which strains will be most abundant during the coming season, and it takes months to make the vaccine ahead of time. The vaccination will protect against three strains of flu each season. Last year, a strain became abundant that had not been one of the anticipated three, so the vaccine didn't protect against that one. But without the vaccine, you are vulnerable to ALL strains!

3) *I would rather have the flu than get a shot.*

**IRRESPONSIBLE!** See the introductory paragraph. Hating shots is no excuse for getting the flu and then passing it to someone who dies from it.

4) *I don't have time.*

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**MAKE TIME!** Flu shots are available at Campus Health Service. How much more convenient can you get? Also, see the introductory paragraph. Mismanagement of your time is no excuse for getting the flu and then passing it to someone who dies from it.

*5) I'll be careful – I won't get the flu.*

**NOT IN YOUR CONTROL!** Every time someone who has the flu coughs or sneezes, millions of flu viruses rest on the surfaces of doorknobs, phones, computer keyboards, hand rails, coins, faucets – all the things you will then touch. Unless you live in a bubble, you can't prevent coming in contact with the virus as long as there are people who aren't vaccinated.

**One more thing!** If you are sick, don't come to school and pass on the illness to others. If you are sick and you work in a lab that researches infectious organisms, pay attention to the symptoms. If the lab organisms cause the same symptoms as you are experiencing, report it to Campus Health Service and to your supervisor immediately! If you aren't sure what symptoms are caused by the lab organisms, ask your supervisor. ASU is obligated to track illnesses that are acquired in the laboratories, so it is important that you report any illness that could be a result of being in one of our labs.

Most of all do what you can to stay healthy. **GET VACCINATED AGAINST SEASONAL FLU!**

If you have any questions related to this or related topics please contact EH&S at (480) 965-1823 or email at [EHS@asu.edu](mailto:EHS@asu.edu)