



**Department of Health**  
140 County Highway 33W  
Suite 3  
Cooperstown, NY 13326  
Phone: (607) 547-6483  
Fax: (607) 547-4385

## **NEWS RELEASE FOR HEALTH CARE PUBLICATIONS**

### **Health Care Workforce Needs Flu Immunizations**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the New York State Department of Health recommend annual influenza immunization for everyone in the health care workforce.

Every year fewer than 40 percent of health care personnel receive an immunization against this serious and deadly disease. It is extremely important for your well-being and for the safety of your patients and loved ones that you are immunized against influenza every year.

If you become ill with influenza, you can spread the flu virus for up to two days before you feel ill. You can infect your patients and family members before you know you are infected and, once you are ill, can continue to infect them for up to five days.

You can also become infected and have mild symptoms or no symptoms at all. However, you can still transmit influenza to others. As part of the health care workforce, you are much more likely to be exposed to and catch influenza during your work day.

Here are the facts about three common myths about influenza.

**Myth #1:** Influenza is just a bad cold.

**Fact:** Influenza is caused by the influenza virus and is much more serious than the common cold. Each year about 200,000 Americans are hospitalized and 36,000 die from influenza and its complications.

Symptoms of influenza can be severe and last for two weeks. Symptoms can include high fever, body aches, headache, and extreme fatigue.

**Myth #2:** The injectable influenza vaccine can cause influenza.

**Fact:** There are two types of influenza immunization that are recommended for members of the health care workforce. The injectable vaccine is made from killed virus, so you cannot get influenza from the influenza shot. The other type, the nasal spray vaccine, or FluMist, is made from live but attenuated (weakened) virus. That means the virus has been changed so that it provides protection and does not cause influenza.

Immunization is 70 to 90 percent effective in healthy individuals who are younger than 65 years of age. It takes about two weeks for your body to develop protection to

influenza after the vaccination. That means, if you were infected with influenza within that two weeks, or just prior to receiving your influenza vaccine, you could still get influenza. But it is not the vaccine that caused it!

Myth #3: I don't need influenza vaccine. I'm healthy.

Fact: Members of the health care workforce are at increased risk for getting influenza because of exposure from patients and in the community. In addition, unvaccinated health care providers who are not sick can still spread the virus to others, including patients and family members. Getting your influenza vaccine is the best way to prevent getting or spreading influenza.

Members of the health care workforce interested in becoming immunized should contact their health care provider, their employer, or local health department. For more information, visit the State Health Department influenza web page at <http://www.nyhealth.gov/diseases/communicable/influenza/>.