

CONSIDERATIONS ABOUT INFLUENZA (FLU)

It is more important than ever this year to get your influenza vaccine.

Why?

The influenza virus and the COVID-19 virus share similar characteristics as it relates to the symptoms that they produce. You run the risk of being infected with the influenza virus and with the COVID-19 virus simultaneously. This dual infection will affect your immune system and you will be vulnerable to the severe complications that both viruses can produce, including death.

Our health care system is already saturated with numerous patients infected with the COVID-19 virus, the least that we need now is an influenza pandemic on top of the COVID-19 virus.

Let's learn more about influenza:

1. Is the flu, also known as influenza, the same as the common cold?

No, influenza is not the same as the common cold. Influenza is caused by a virus called influenza virus. The common cold is caused by different viruses such as Rhinovirus and Adenovirus. Influenza is a more serious disease that can have serious complications as compared to the common cold, which is a milder upper respiratory disease.

2. Why is it that each year so much attention is placed upon the flu or influenza?

Each year, so much attention is placed upon the flu or influenza because it is a highly contagious disease. It is a debilitating illness that can lead to complications, hospitalizations and even death.

Individuals that become infected with the influenza virus initially may not even be aware that they have become infected with the virus. It takes about one week for symptoms to become apparent and it is during this asymptomatic period that an individual can infect others. This is one of the reasons that influenza is such a contagious disease.

3. How will I know if I have contracted influenza?

Individuals who have contracted influenza will never forget when the symptoms began.

The symptoms begin all of a sudden with a high fever and shaking chills. The patients will experience intense muscle and joint pain and intense weakness that will render the patient bedbound. Some patients will experience nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, and diarrhea. These symptoms may last anywhere between 7 and 10 days. The patient may develop pneumonia, which may lead to hospitalization, requiring the patient to be intubated. Often times the influenza virus affects the kidneys leading to dialysis and death.

4. Which is the best way to prevent infection with the influenza virus?

The best way to avoid from becoming infected with the influenza virus is to be immunized at the beginning of each influenza (flu) season, which begins in September and ends in April or May, depending on the severity of the virus.

5. Can the influenza vaccine cause the influenza illness?

No, the influenza vaccine cannot cause the influenza illness.

The reason is because the vaccine does not contain a live influenza virus, it contains an inactivated form of the virus. The virus is not alive.

6. Why is it that in the past I have become ill after I have received the influenza vaccine?

There are two reasons:

#1. The first reason is that you may have come in contact with the influenza virus a few days prior to having been administered the influenza vaccine and you are in the asymptomatic period that we have discussed previously.

#2. The second reason is that the influenza season and that of the common cold coincide therefore, you can still get the common cold even if you have received your influenza vaccine. The influenza vaccine will only protect you against the influenza virus.

7. Who are the individuals that should get the influenza vaccine each year?

Every individual 6 months of age and older and every adult including adults 65 years of age and older, including pregnant women.

8. Who are the individuals who are more at risk to developing complications from the flu or Influenza?

Anyone that develops the influenza or flu is at risk to developing complications from the disease. However, those more at risk are:

Children less than 5 years old.

Individuals 65 years of age or older.

Individuals who suffer from Asthma, Emphysema, COPD or other pulmonary conditions.

Those individuals that have a heart condition.

Those individuals whose immune system is depressed.

Pregnant women.

9. If I am allergic to eggs, should I get the influenza or flu vaccine?

Yes, you should get the vaccine since allergy to eggs is not a contraindication to getting the vaccine.

There are only three contraindications to receiving the influenza vaccine:

A. Having developed a severe reaction to the influenza vaccine in the past.

B. Having developed guillain-barre syndrome in the past.

C. Being ill with a fever or without a fever at the time of vaccination. You can receive the vaccine after all of your symptoms have resolved.