

## Fight the Flu

Know the Truth NOT the Myths

**MYTH:** The seasonal flu vaccine protects against H1N1 (swine) flu.

**FACT:** Unfortunately, no. This fall you will need to get the seasonal flu vaccine and the H1N1 vaccine when it becomes available. The H1N1 (swine) flu shot will have 2 doses (initial and a booster 21 days later). These shots protect you from two different viruses, so it is important that you take the time to get all 3 vaccines to best protect yourself and your family.

“Get Your 3 to Remain Flu Free”

**MYTH:** The flu shot can give you the flu.

**FACT:** The viruses in the flu shot are killed (inactivated), so you can't get the flu from a flu shot. It takes about two weeks to get protection from the vaccine so some people may get sick before the shot becomes effective, but people assume that because they got sick after getting the vaccine the shot caused their illness.

**MYTH:** You can catch the flu from going out in cold weather.

**FACT:** The only way to catch the flu is by being exposed to the influenza virus. Flu season typically occurs during the winter months when people are spending more time indoors and have closer contact to one another which increases the chance that you will be near someone who is sick.

**MYTH:** The flu is only dangerous for the elderly.

**FACT:** Seasonal flu is typically more serious in people over 65, but flu can be risky for anyone, even young healthy adults. With novel H1N1 flu (swine), the largest number of cases has occurred in people between the ages of 5 and 24-years-olds.

**MYTH:** Antibiotics can fight the flu.

**FACT:** Antibiotics can cure bacterial infections – not viral infections. Viruses cause the common cold and the flu. Antibiotics will not help cure the infection or make you feel better.

**MYTH:** The flu is annoying but harmless.

**FACT:** The flu can cause mild to severe illness, and at times can lead to death. Every year in the United States, about 5% to 20% of the population gets the flu; more than 200,000 people are hospitalized from flu complications, and about 36,000 people die from flu-related causes. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimate that the number of people who usually get sick in a normal flu season could increase with two strains circulating (Seasonal and H1N1 swine flu).

**MYTH:** You can't spread the flu if you're feeling well.

**FACT:** Actually, 20% to 30% of people carrying the influenza virus have no symptoms. People can also be contagious 24 hours before their symptoms begin.



**MYTH:** You don't need to get a flu shot every year.

**FACT:** The influenza virus changes (mutates) each year. Getting vaccinated each year is important to make sure you have immunity to the strains most likely to make people sick.

**MYTH:** Feed a cold, starve a fever.

**FACT:** If you have the flu (or a cold), you need more fluids. There's little reason to increase or decrease how much you eat. Though you may have no appetite, "starving" yourself will accomplish little and poor nutrition will not help you get better.

**MYTH:** The 'stomach flu' is a form of influenza.

**FACT:** Many people use the term "stomach flu" to describe illnesses with nausea, vomiting or diarrhea. These symptoms can be caused by many different viruses, bacteria or even parasites. While vomiting, diarrhea, and being nauseous can sometimes be related to the flu these problems are rarely the main symptoms of influenza. The flu is a respiratory illness and not a stomach disease.



If you have any questions contact Caldwell County Health Department at (828)426-8400 or visit our website [www.caldwellcountync.org](http://www.caldwellcountync.org)