

The Flu and You



What does the research show?

The information presented below is based on a thorough review of the scientific literature by Canadian researchers, and is taken from the Ottawa Influenza Decision Aid.*

Blocks of 100 faces show a 'best estimate' of what happens to 100 people who choose different options during a flu season. Each face ☺ stands for one person. The shaded areas show the number of people affected. There is no way of knowing in advance if you will be affected.

Benefits	No flu shot or no antiviral pills	Flu shot	Antiviral pills
<p>▲ Fewer people in the community get the flu during an outbreak if they take the flu shot or antiviral pills</p>	<p>15 get the flu</p> <p>85 avoid flu</p>	<p>5 get the flu</p> <p>95 avoid flu</p>	<p>4 get the flu</p> <p>96 avoid flu</p>
<p>★ Fewer patients die from the flu if their care provider has a flu shot</p>	<p>15 die from flu</p> <p>85 don't die</p>	<p>11 die from flu</p> <p>89 don't die</p>	<p>Unknown</p>
Side Effects	Placebo	Flu shot	Antiviral pills
<p>★ More people who have a flu shot report having a sore arm for 1 or 2 days</p>	<p>23 sore arms</p> <p>77 avoid this</p>	<p>52 sore arms</p> <p>48 avoid this</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>★ More people who take antiviral pills report nausea and vomiting while taking pills</p>	<p>8 get nausea & vomiting</p> <p>92 avoid this</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>15 get nausea & vomiting</p> <p>85 avoid this</p>

▲ Platinum or ★ Gold symbols mean stronger study results. ★ Silver or ▲ Bronze symbols mean weaker study results.

Guillain-Barré syndrome is a rare nervous system disorder where the body's immune system attacks the nerves in the body. This can cause weakening and numbing of the muscles, and, in severe cases, paralysis may occur. The exact causes of this disorder are unknown, but it is commonly triggered by an infection. Influenza vaccine may increase the risk of developing this disorder. If a million people have a flu shot, one person may get Guillain-Barré syndrome and 999,999 people avoid it. This risk is the same as dying in an airplane or train accident. Some people wonder if the flu shot causes fever, fatigue, headache, or muscle pain. They are just as likely to get these symptoms if they are given a shot with a placebo (an inactive substance).

This information is not intended to replace the advice of a health care provider.

* For more information or a copy of the Ottawa Influenza Decision Aid, please contact your Occupational Health and Safety representatives.

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This research study has been approved by the Ottawa Hospital Research Ethics Board.

Clear Information Clear Choices

