



Public Health Brief

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It's Not Too Late!

No, I am not talking about Christmas shopping!

The flu season is underway, and off to a slow start. Activity will continue to increase over the next several months – we just do not know how bad a season it will be, or when it will peak, but there is a 100% chance **WE WILL HAVE A FLU SEASON THIS WINTER!!** Since it takes 2 weeks for the flu shot to take effect, **NOW** is the time to get your vaccination if you have not done so already. Act now in order to protect yourself, your grandkids, your nieces and nephews, your aunts and uncles, and your grandparents before you see them all over the holidays – many of them are at high risk for complications from the flu.

I am particularly concerned about the following news story. Don't be one of the 41%!

CHICAGO, Dec. 5, 2018 — Despite repeated warnings about the potential dangers of the flu, a new survey from NORC at the University of Chicago finds that more than half of all Americans have yet to get the flu shot, and few intend to do so. As of mid-November, 43 percent of adults reported that they had gotten a flu vaccination. Another 14 percent had not yet been vaccinated but intended to get a vaccination this season. However, **41 percent of adults report they have not been vaccinated and do not intend to do so.**

"Flu vaccination helps prevent people from getting sick with the flu and reduces the severity of illness for those who do get sick. Widespread vaccination also helps create 'herd immunity' that protects vulnerable groups who are prevented from getting vaccinated," said Caroline Pearson, senior fellow at NORC at the University of Chicago. "Unfortunately, over half of all adults are currently unvaccinated, with 4 in 10 not intending to get vaccinated, placing themselves and those around them at risk."



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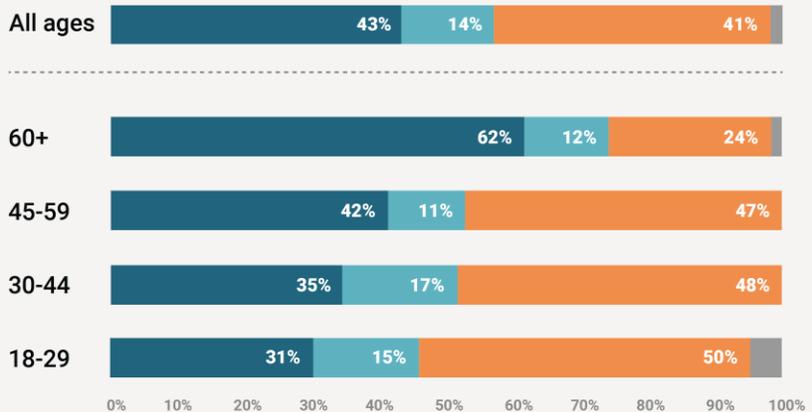
AMERISPEAK SPOTLIGHT ON HEALTH

- Have been vaccinated
- Plan to get vaccinated
- Do not plan to get vaccinated
- Other*

NORC at the University of Chicago's AmeriSpeak® Spotlight on Health is a series of quick-hitting national surveys on issues vital to health and well-being, conducted using AmeriSpeak's probability-based panel.



Adults' Plans to Receive the Flu Vaccination for 2018-19 Season



*Other includes individuals who responded, "I don't know" or those who skipped the question.
Note: Vaccination rates are self-reported.

People over age 60, who are at higher risk for flu-related complications, report the highest vaccination rate (62 percent). However, 1 in 4 (24 percent) people age 60 and older still do not plan to get vaccinated this season. Adults under age 45 are the least likely to report being vaccinated, with roughly half of this group indicating they do not plan to receive a vaccination this year.

Routine annual influenza vaccination for all persons age 6 months or older who do not have contraindications has been recommended by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices since 2010. CDC estimates that flu vaccination coverage among adults was 37 percent for the 2017-18 season and 43 percent for the 2016-17 season.

Among adults who have children under age 18 living in their home, 39 percent said they do not vaccinate their children.

People who do not intend to get a vaccination have concerns about the flu shot efficacy and side effects, or they are not worried about getting the flu.



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When asked why they do not intend to be vaccinated, adults were most likely to cite concerns about side effects from the vaccine (36 percent). Roughly 3 in 10 adults cited concerns about getting sick from the vaccine (31 percent). Three in 10 adults said a major reason they do not get vaccinated is because they never get the flu or they do not think the flu vaccine works (31 percent). Notably, people rarely cited barriers to access—such as the vaccine costing too much (6 percent) or not having time to get it (5 percent)—as reasons they would not be vaccinated. Unfortunately, many people are still not getting flu shots due to broader misconceptions about the value of receiving a flu shot and concerns about the safety and efficacy of the vaccines.

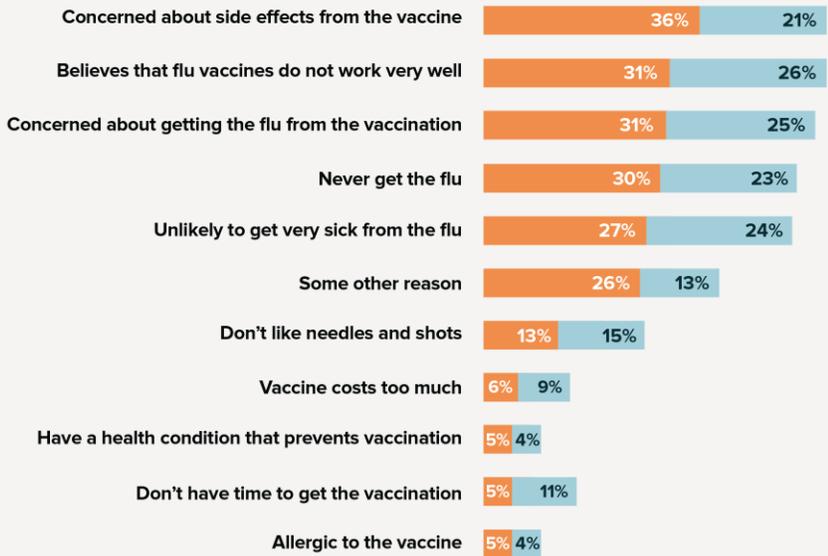
AMERISPEAK SPOTLIGHT ON HEALTH

- Major reason
- Minor reason

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Reasons People Do Not Plan to Get a Flu Vaccine



Note: Only includes responses from those individuals who reported they had not received a flu shot and did not plan to get one this season.

Last year's flu season (2017-18) was particularly severe, with high rates of flu-related hospitalizations and deaths. However, the survey found that most respondents (63 percent) incorrectly believed that last year's season was about the same as usual, less severe than usual, or didn't know. Not surprisingly, people who already got their flu shot for this season had higher awareness; 43 percent of people in the already vaccinated group correctly identified last year's season as "more severe than usual," compared to only 30 percent of people who do not plan to get vaccinated.

For more information, and to stay current on what is happening this flu season, go to:

<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/>



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