



## To Your Health: The Flu Vaccination Quiz

***Eric Loeliger, MD, the vice president for medical affairs at Asante Three Rivers, has come up with a fun way to look at a serious matter. His influenza quiz allows participants to look at both real-life beliefs and medical reality in the answers to common, flu-related questions.***



***Dr. Loeliger's quiz – a common-sense test for all Asante employees:***

First the good: Last year, Asante hospitals met or surpassed their seasonal goals for employee flu vaccinations (76 percent at ARRCM and ATRMC, and 70 percent at AACH). Thank you!

Now the not-so-good: Reaching that goal was harder than it should have been, and hundreds of employees still went unvaccinated.

Their reasons vary, but we've learned that even among educated health care workers certain myths persist. So here's a quiz based on some real-life beliefs versus medical evidence.

### **1) The chance of a healthy person contracting influenza in a given year is:**

- A. 2 to 5 percent
- B. 5 to 20 percent
- C. 20 to 30 percent
- D. Less than 2 percent if the person exercises, eats healthy foods, and wishes *really hard* not to get the flu
- E. 0 percent if the person takes "immune booster" supplements

*The answer is B. There is no evidence that wishful thinking or immune boosters ward off the flu.*

### **2) Influenza is characterized by cough, fever, sore throat and sore muscles. It lasts seven to 14 days and may progress to:**

- A. Shortness of breath, pneumonia and death, but only in sick, old people
- B. Shortness of breath, pneumonia and death, but only in babies
- C. Shortness of breath, pneumonia, and death and kills an average of 36,000 Americans every year, regardless of age or health status

*The answer is C. One of these people could be your patient, co-worker, friend, or loved one.*

### **3) The best way to prevent the spread of influenza is to wash your hands.**

- A. True
- B. False

***(read more, next page)***

C. Is this a trick?

*The answer is C. The best way to prevent the spread of influenza is to get a vaccine. You can pass influenza to another person before you know you have it, so being vaccinated is vital to preventing spread. Washing hands is important to reduce transmission of influenza and other illnesses, but if someone with influenza sneezes or coughs on you, washing your hands will not prevent the spread of influenza.*

**4) The chances of contracting influenza from the injected vaccine are approximately:**

- A. 10 percent
- B. 20 percent
- C. 30 percent
- D. Absolutely zero

*The answer is D. Flu vaccines may cause a mild reaction, but they do not cause the flu.*

**5) People believe the vaccine gave them influenza because:**

- A. Some people get sick with a viral illness soon after receiving the vaccine.
- B. It takes up to two weeks to develop immunity after receiving the vaccine.
- C. It's a convenient excuse to not get the vaccine.
- D. Everyone knows someone who swears that this happened.
- E. All of the above.

*The answer is E. People who do get sick after a shot may have picked up another respiratory virus, or they may have been exposed to the flu before the vaccine's immunity kicks in.*

#### **More from Dr. Loeliger**

Flu vaccines are not 100 percent effective, but they are the best prevention we have. Does locking your doors every time you leave the house guarantee no one can break in? No, but it is the easiest, most effective preventive measure you can take.

Over the years, we've heard other excuses:

- *"I'm healthy and I don't get sick."* This is wishful thinking.
- *"I'll just wear a mask."* You will need to put one on today and keep it on 24/7 until flu season ends. You don't always know whether a person has the flu since transmission occurs before symptoms appear.
- *"I'll wash my hands more often."* Please do, but again, if someone with influenza sneezes or coughs on you, washing your hands will not ward off the flu.
- *"Vaccines are just a way for big pharma to make more money."* They may make some money with vaccines, but can you imagine how much more money they will make with an influenza outbreak? They actually have more incentive to keep you from being vaccinated.

None of these reasons will protect you from influenza or from spreading it to others. We dodged a bullet with H1N1, but public health experts agree that a future serious pandemic is not a matter of "if," but "when." The surest way to prevent the next deadly outbreak is to get vaccinated!