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Flu Shot Benefits More Than You -- Don't Put Others at Risk

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Flu Shot Benefits More Than You -- Don't Put Others at Risk

By Heather Waymouth
UCF Forum columnist
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I have never been more baffled by my fellow students than I have in the past few weeks.

When asking my friends a simple question – “Are you getting the flu shot this season? They are free on campus today.” – not a single one of them answered yes.

Whether you are someone who fits into that category or are someone who gets the flu shot every season, have you ever considered the most vital reason to get one? By not getting the flu shot, people endanger others around them whose bodies may not stand a chance of surviving the flu: people who suffer immune diseases and other health risks.

The reasons students say they do not want to get the flu shot are irritating and selfish excuses. Some of the common excuses are: “I don’t like needles,” “I’ll be fine this season, I never get sick,” or “The flu is not that bad.”

People often do not realize that even though they are healthy and their bodies can fight the flu, there are people whose bodies cannot. Think about how many people you are in contact with on a daily basis who are diabetic, have asthma, elderly, pregnant or have heart disease.

Individuals with these health conditions are at higher risk from flu complications than the average person. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 90 percent of deaths during a regular flu season are 65 and older. The center has estimated that an average of 36,000 people die each year from the flu.

It is important to not only protect yourself, but to also protect others around you. Giving someone the flu is not the best gift.

There also are individuals who cannot receive the vaccination. People with egg and vaccine allergies, Guillain-Barre Syndrome and infants are a few groups that have no pre-protection to the flu.

By getting the flu shot, people are limiting the ability for the flu virus to transmit, especially to those who don't have access to protection. In other words, the more people who get the vaccination, the less the flu virus can spread.

It is never too late to get the flu shot. The season starts in October, peaks in January and lasts until May – so we're in the middle of that right now.

Flu shots are inexpensive. Students can receive free flu shots at the Health Center on campus. The Health Center also hosts events in the Student Union to make access to the shots easier for students.

Faculty and staff can receive vaccines for as low as \$20, the average price at most walk-in clinics.

Don't like needles? People can also receive a nasal-spray vaccine that replaces the shot.

So there is no excuse to avoid a vaccination.

Some people believe that getting the flu shot will give them the flu — which is a myth. The vaccination contains a “dead” influenza virus that doesn't cause the flu. The only time someone can get the flu after receiving the vaccination is if they catch a different virus than what was predicted in the prepared vaccinations that flu season.

I think the largest reason why people do not get the flu vaccination is because they are not educated on the effects of the virus. Yes, it is important to be vaccinated to prevent yourself from getting sick, but it is also important to save others.

If students knew how much they can harm others by not getting the shot, maybe they would not hesitate to receive the vaccination. And since campuses provide free flu shots for students, then why wouldn't they take the offer?

Perhaps if they see no personal benefit, then they don't feel the obligation to go out of their daily schedule to get a vaccination.

But the person who may most need you to be vaccinated could be right next to you.

To schedule a flu shot at the UCF Health Center, go to <http://hs.sdes.ucf.edu/services/flu.html>.

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