

CITY OF BALTIMORE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Health Department Debunks Flu Vaccine Myths

BALTIMORE, MD — (November 10, 2008) — With more flu vaccine available than ever before, the Baltimore City Health Department wants to debunk some relatively common misconceptions about the potentially life-saving flu vaccine.



### Myth 1: The flu isn't all that bad.

**Facts:** Each year, an average of 36,000 Americans die and 226,000 are hospitalized due to the flu. 20,000 children are hospitalized and an average of 92 previously healthy children die each year from this disease. Last year 496 Baltimore citizens died from flu. Flu sickens 5-20% of Americans annually, resulting in lost days from work and from school. The American economy is not immune - flu season results in lost productivity at a cost of \$7 billion.

### Myth 2: You can get the flu from the flu vaccine.

**Facts:** It is impossible to get the flu from the flu vaccine. The shot contains only killed material - portions of the flu "bug" which have been totally inactivated to make the vaccine safe. Of course, mild side effects can occur with any shot. These include redness and soreness at the injection site in up to two-thirds of people vaccinated. The effects resolve in 1-2 days. Approximately 10% of patients may experience systemic effects which include fever, headache and muscle aches. Again, these are typically gone in 1-2 days. The inhaled flu vaccine also does not cause the flu.

### Myth 3: In deciding on whether to get the flu vaccine, all I have to think about is myself.

**Facts:** You could pass the flu on to a parent or child, who could suffer a devastating complication. Healthcare workers can pass the flu to their patients. Protect yourself and those you care for this year by getting the flu vaccine.

The Health Department especially recommends vaccination for health care workers; children ages 6 to 59 months; pregnant and breastfeeding women; household contacts and out-of-home caregivers of children under 6 months; persons 50 years of age and older people of any age with chronic medical conditions; and people who live in nursing homes and long-term care facilities.

To find the flu vaccine, contact your doctor, or see a list of public flu clinics online at <http://www.baltimorehealth.org>.



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