



AVIATION MEDICAL BULLETIN™

PUBLISHED BY HARVEY WATT & COMPANY BECAUSE HEALTH AND FITNESS MATTER TO AVIATORS

SPECIAL ISSUE: FLU SEASON UPDATE

Every year at this time, you can walk into almost any grocery store or pharmacy and see signs offering incentives to get a flu vaccination. The reason you see these signs is that influenza (flu) is a highly contagious respiratory infection that can produce very serious illness, hospitalization, and sometimes death. If you are unfortunate enough to contract the flu, you will likely be very sick, be restricted from flying for several days, and quite possibly transmit it to others. The best way to keep from getting the flu is to get a flu shot. However, some people refuse to get a flu shot because they think they can get the flu from the shot. That is not possible because flu vaccines are made from killed viruses. A flu shot is recommended for almost everyone including pregnant women unless they have a compromised immune system or allergies to eggs or the vaccine itself. You should get a flu shot as soon as possible because it takes two weeks to become effective. While the shot may cause mild symptoms such as sleepiness, headache, or muscle aches, these symptoms are nothing compared to having the flu and they usually only last a day or two.

In previous years, a nasal spray mist was available, and it may still be offered by some practitioners. However, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has questioned its effectiveness and recommends that it not be administered this year.

While I am on the subject of immunizations, I recommend that you talk to your doctor about two other vaccinations. If you are over 50, there is vaccination for pneumococcal pneumonia, a very serious bacterial illness that can appear quickly, be very severe, and last for weeks. If you are over 60 or have had chicken pox, there is a vaccination for Herpes Zoster also called Shingles. Shingles causes an extremely painful rash which occurs on one side of the body or face. It typically lasts from two to four weeks, and is often accompanied by fever, chills, and headache.

The FAA does not require that any of these immunizations be reported during your periodic medical examination.

In closing, get your flu shot and talk to your doctor about the other two vaccinations.

Have a happy and healthy Thanksgiving and holiday season, and Fly Safe