

Is a Flu Shot the Best Way to Fight the Flu?

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Every year it's the same thing, a constant stream of news segments about this winter's flu epidemic, the unavailability of a vaccination, the number of deaths, etc. "If only people would get their flu shots," drone the TV anchors. But is a flu shot the best way to fight the flu? Do people study the research related to flu vaccine efficacy? The Dutch did a study regarding elderly individuals (considered high-risk with relation to the flu) in one retirement home, and found that 50 percent of the vaccinated individuals contracted the flu, and only 48 percent of the non-vaccinated individuals contracted the flu (ten percent of those with the flu — with or without the vaccination, died). This study shows that fewer of the non-vaccinated group actually contracted the flu. More interesting was that in a different retirement home in which no one received vaccinations, only 37 percent contracted the flu with three percent of those being fatal.

During the last couple of years it has become popular to give flu shots to children and even babies. I attempted to find research supporting this popularity, but could find none. However, I found plenty of research to the contrary. For example: large scale studies of the compulsory flu vaccination of children in Japan showed the vaccine to be ineffective against the flu, but conducive to lawsuits. As a result, in 1987, the Japanese government changed their policy on vaccinations from compulsory to voluntary. By 1989, even though only 20 percent of the Japanese children had a flu shot, the amount of cases of the flu did not increase.

Rather than the media blaming the flu for the ill health of our children, perhaps they should focus on educating the public about how to help children develop strong immune systems, and how important good diet, exercise, rest, and stress reduction is for building health in children. While it's true that children die from the flu each year, does a flu shot make a difference, or would our children be better served by adopting a healthier lifestyle preparing them to transition through the process of being sick with a flu virus?

References:

Beyer, W. E. P.; et. al. Influenza-epidemie in een verpleeghuis door een virus dat niet in het vaccin was opgenomen. Ned Tijdschr Geneeskd, 1993; 137/39: 1973-7

"Why the Japanese government had to cease compulsory vaccinations"

A presentation by Dr. Yamamoto, Naples, Italy, June 1997

<http://www.whale.to/vaccines/flu7.html>