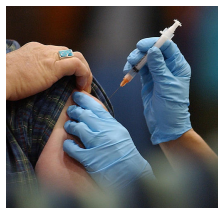


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By: Tudor Vieru, Science Editor



Flu shots are inexpensive, and can protect you and your loved ones from the effects of the human rhinovirus
MIT

Half of Americans Refuse Flu Shots

Some of them want to build up their own immune system

Misconceptions and words of mouth may cause thousands of avoidable flu cases this season, as a new survey shows that approximately 48 percent of US citizens do not want to get the inexpensive flu vaccine this year, due to either bizarre reasons or the fact that they want to build up their immune defenses naturally. Health officials caution people not to avoid their shots, saying that, even if adults are not severely affected by the human rhinovirus (HRV), they could transmit the disease to vulnerable people, for which the consequences can be dire. Among the reasons for not getting the vaccine, people cited dislike for either doctors or needles (25 percent), the fact that they don't get sick (45 percent), or, surprisingly, that they believe that the vaccine itself can trigger influenza. Doctors say that this assumption is fundamentally erroneous, propagated by people who have no medical training whatsoever. Indeed, one or two days after the vaccination, a mild fever and flu-like symptoms may occur, but that's perfectly natural, as the body's immune system is adapting itself to the vaccine. Many people don't know that, inside vaccines, there are the exact same pathogens triggering the diseases, only in smaller concentrations. This allows our systems to fight off the infection, and develop antibodies for that specific virus. "Sounds like a lot of excuses and misconceptions to avoid a quick and inexpensive, if not free, shot," Dr. John Santa, director of the Consumer Reports Health Ratings Center, the institution that conducted the current survey, told [Reuters](#). "There is no evidence that people who get flu shots have lower natural immunities or that people who don't get flu shots have higher immunities," he added. Some 52 percent of the participants to the survey said that they would get a flu shot, in anticipation to the new flu season, which usually starts in late October and lasts until April or May.