

In a few months you will be bombarded with recommendations to get flu shots. It will be recommended that you get both a regular flu shot and the vaccine that is currently being developed to protect you from the swine flu. You will hear ominous warnings about the consequences for not getting vaccinated. I feel compelled to inject a little common sense before the hype begins.

There is already a lot of misunderstanding regarding the flu. The media regularly reports that the number of deaths from the regular flu are around 26 thousand per year. This is actually false. According to the CDC there are only about 1,800 deaths attributed to the flu. Many people believe that the swine flu is even more deadly than the regular flu. According to a recent article in the Daily Citizen, half of us believe that the swine flu is life threatening.

Those same individuals should be more worried about getting in their cars every day. You are 200 times more likely to die in a car accident than from the swine flu. So far there have been approximately 34,000 confirmed cases of swine flu in the U.S. The C.D.C. estimates that there have actually been around 1 million cases, with most unreported. Regardless of which number is true, there have been only 230 deaths. In a population of over 3 million Americans, that means that the risk of death from the swine flu is .00008%. The risk among those who have gotten the flu is .002%. Both are very small numbers. The risk of dying from aids is much higher.

So should you get the vaccine when it is available? Well that is a decision you must make on your own; however, there are some factors that you should consider before making that decision. First, you must realize that this vaccine is being rushed to market. There will be little time to study the negative side effects of the vaccine before flu season hits. The last time there was a swine flu panic there were many more people harmed by the vaccine than by the flu.

Also, all flu shots have a poor success rate. It is never known what flu strain will be prevalent in any given year. As a result the vaccine makers must simply guess at the strain to target. If they guess wrong, as they did a couple of years ago, the vaccine is ineffective

The current strain of the swine flu causes a relatively mild case of the flu that most people will recover from without any treatment. The C.D.C. has expressed concern that the strain may mutate to a more deadly version. If that is true then the vaccine that is currently being developed may be ineffective against it, since it is designed to target the current, more mild strain.

It has been recommended that school aged children should be the first group to receive this experimental vaccine. I encourage you to do your own research before agreeing to allow your children to be part of this experiment. For more information, look to non-industry sponsored information sources like the National Vaccine Information Center at nvic.org.