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FLU SHOT....OR NOT?

By Yvette Taylor

There is no easy answer to this very serious question. If you have ever had the "real" flu, with 105 fever, chills, aches, and pure misery for 2 weeks, you are probably more likely to get the regular shot. I have had the flu twice. The first time was in 1969, when I was out shopping for holiday presents. I felt fine when we got to the mall, but after a bit of shopping, I felt sick and passed out in the store! The second time was about 10 years later, when I lived in Boston. The location is important to my sad tale because there was an awful snow storm. I had such bad chest pains that I just had to go to the doctor. Friends with a four-wheel drive picked me up and we slowly made our way. I did not, as I feared, have a heart attack. Instead, I had cracked two ribs from coughing so much and so hard. I have gotten the flu shot every year thereafter and have never had side effects or the flu nor have I ever had the flu again!

My rheumatologist Dr. Phillippe Saxe gave me flu shot 2 weeks ago. I asked him whether he believed all persons with fibro should get it. His answer was emphatic. "Fibro patients with the flu would face horrible complications, and I advise that all patients get the shot." Dr. Saxe is now conducting a study on the H1N1 flu shot at the Delray Research Center. He asked me to join the study, but I am waiting. I am not too concerned about the additive, thimerosal, which is a mercury-based preservative that will be in about 60% of the 225 million swine flu does. Through my work with the American Association of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, which includes studies on autism, I am of the opinion that mercury does not cause autism (not a single peer-reviewed scientific study has shown any evidence for a correlation). I have decided to get that shot when the most vulnerable individuals have the option and are covered.

Marly Silverman has contributed the following information for members with CFS/ME:

"If you have CFS/ME, please discuss this issue with your specialist and your family physician. Your specialist may differ a bit on how to approach the personal decision of whether a patient with CFS/ME should take the flue shot. I personally do take it every year because the one year I did not, I came down with the flu, triggering a severe CFS relapse of great proportion. This happened before medications for influenza were available. My doctors now recommend that I take the flu shot. I do experience reactions to the shot, but they are much more manageable, lasting anywhere from 3 to 6 weeks, but it is much better than to have at least 6 months of feeling miserable and weak.

Because I believe that knowledge is power, please click here to read Dr. Charles Lapps medical advice. He does not favor the flue shots for his CFS/ME patients unless they have other chronic high-risk conditions [e.g., asthma]. And, as always, please consult your physician and empower yourself with knowledge so you can make an educated decision."

The Centers for Disease control estimates that 36,000 people die from influenza each year; and as we all now know, the H1N1 flu is spreading rapidly.

[For more information, visit the Centers for Disease Control website](#)