

Flu Myth 1 – It's Just the Flu

It's just the flu. Every time a patient comes in with a little runny nose, or a cough, or congestion, and we say, "Eh, don't worry about it, "you've just got a cold or a flu," we're guilty of spreading the myth that the flu is not a big deal.

It's true, a cold is not a big deal, usually it's fine. But the flu really is quite dangerous. Every year in the United States, 25 to 50 million people come down with the flu, with over 200,000 people being hospitalized. Kids less than two years of age are as likely as adults over 65 to be hospitalized from complications due to the flu. Each year in the U.S., flu kills about 36,000 people. It's a hard number to get your head around, what does that mean, 36,000 people?

Well, compare it to something that people are afraid of, like AIDS, for example. Each year, AIDS kills less than half that number, around 17,000 people. Compare it to breast cancer, something people are very afraid of. Breast cancer kills about 39,000 people each year. If I had a vaccine for breast cancer, I can guarantee you wouldn't say, "Nah, it's just breast cancer, who cares?" Of course not, you'd be knocking down the doors trying to get ahold of that. But when it comes to the flu, it's just the flu.