

Flu Psychology: Who Risks What for Whom?

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The Huffington Post:

My local pharmacy is offering flu shots. A window sign grabbed my attention the other day, because it was a sweltering, muggy day, and it seemed way too early to think about winter flu bugs. But a little digging proved me wrong on this. Apparently the vaccine takes a couple of weeks to kick in, and seasonal flu bugs can arrive as early as October. So I did the arithmetic, and I'm lining up to get poked.

I've gotten flu shots for years, though I'm not in any high-risk group. It just seems prudent to me. And the fact is, public health officials count on people who are at low or moderate risk to get inoculated anyway. The elderly get the sickest, and sick more often, but young people (children especially) are the ones responsible for spreading germs around, so the goal is to create "herd immunity" that protects the most vulnerable. Kids, in effect, are being asked to take on the risks of vaccination to protect the elderly.

This complex dynamic presents an intriguing social and psychological dilemma, one that Rutgers University psychological scientist Gretchen Chapman wanted to explore in the laboratory. She and her colleagues wanted to examine the conditions under which young people would make this trade-off, getting vaccinated to protect the elderly, and when they would not.

Read the whole story: [*The Huffington Post*](#)