Researchers Make Progress Toward New Flu Shot Pill and Universal Vaccine

September 24, 2015

Your annual fall search for the latest flu shot may soon be over. Scientists say they've found preliminary success in two new influenza vaccine alternatives. One, is a vaccine in pill form and another would protect against every flu strain ready to pounce, NBC News reports.

Briefly, vaccine shots protect against illness by essentially tricking the body into building up an immune response to different flu viruses. The flu virus is notoriously hard to stop, because there are dozens of different strains and hundreds of different combinations, and the virus constantly mutates. This is why new flu shots need to be developed every year to stay one step ahead of the illness.

New findings, published in the Lancet Infectious Diseases, show that an oral flu vaccine being developed by California-based Vaxart Inc. built up enough antibodies in nine out of 12 people to protect against the flu.

In addition, a team of researchers at the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases reported progress toward a so-called "universal flu vaccine" that could protect against all types of flu at once.

But don't race to a drugstore or a clinic near you just yet. Doctors say the two studies merely show promising ground gained in the fight against one of the country's most prevalent and deadly illnesses, and much more research is needed.

Each year, the flu strikes 20 percent of Americans. Click here to learn more about why, even with the vaccines available, this happens.

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