

# "There's an Unvaccinated Sucker Born Every Minute"

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(NOTE: The original blog post on the American Council on Science and Health's site includes hyperlinks for some words, which I included in parentheses here even though the format looks odd)  
from [http://www.acsh.org/factsfears/newsID.465/news\\_detail.asp](http://www.acsh.org/factsfears/newsID.465/news_detail.asp)

With severe limits on flu vaccine availability, it is only natural that the public will try to seek out other effective means of flu prevention. Feeding off the widespread panic over the flu and the desire for alternatives in flu prevention, an abundance of "flu remedies" is now available on the Internet, making strong and misleading claims. Vulnerable people, relatively unregulated "dietary supplements," and the vast territory of the Internet combine to create fertile ground for misinformation.

A simple Internet search reveals a wide variety of products making grand claims about their ability to prevent and/or treat the flu, boost the immune system, and in some cases prevent or treat everything from cancer to wrinkles. The three products below were among those advertised in the top sponsored links for a Google search of the word "flu":

– Some may be happy to hear that they can actually order a tiny bit of the flu vaccine online in the form of Influenzinum 30C ([http://homeopathyworks.com/shopsite\\_sc/store/html/flu.html](http://homeopathyworks.com/shopsite_sc/store/html/flu.html)), an oral homeopathic remedy that uses an extremely diluted form of this year's vaccine and is "effective," according to the advertisement on Google. However, before you get too excited, realize that you would need to buy a volume of Influenzinum equal to more than 300 septillion times the volume of the sun in order to get the amount of flu vaccine present in one dose of the traditional vaccination.(1) Even that amount — were the manufacturer somehow able to provide it and were you somehow able to ingest it — would probably not do much for you, as the vaccine needs to be injected.

– The website of Total Body Defense (<http://www.fluaway.net/index.htm>)

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claims that the product is the "#1 recommended flu shot alternative" and also includes a statement formatted to seem as if it was ripped out of a newspaper, stating, "Doctors recommend TOTAL BODY DEFENSE to prepare for the upcoming flu season due to a shortage in flu vaccines." (It also claims that the product can "induce daily fat loss" and "fight aging," among other things.) However, there was not even one specific doctor mentioned as an endorser on the site, nor any indication that anyone aside from the manufacturer endorses it as the top "flu shot alternative." Furthermore, the website details the supposed effects of seven of its ingredients (<http://www.fluaway.net/ingredients.htm>) but cites specific studies for only one of them (other references to scientific studies are vague or do not give a specific citation). Also, no part of the site mentions the potential side effects, contraindications, or drug interactions ([http://www.acsh.org/publications/pubID.515/pub\\_detail.asp](http://www.acsh.org/publications/pubID.515/pub_detail.asp)) of any of its ingredients, such as ginkgo ([http://www.rxlist.com/cgi/alt/ginkgo\\_wcp.htm](http://www.rxlist.com/cgi/alt/ginkgo_wcp.htm)), which should not be used by pregnant women or people taking blood-thinning medications such as aspirin.

– Perhaps the most troubling "remedy" in the search results was Mesosilver (a colloidal silver solution), marketed by Purest Colloids, Inc ([www.purestcolloids.com](http://www.purestcolloids.com)). The homepage of Purest Colloids, Inc. states that, "While we make no health claims about the use or effectiveness of our product line, our customers have found our products helpful in a wide variety of applications." This disclaimer, like others on its site, is likely present due to the Food and Drug Administration's 1999 ruling (<http://www.fda.gov/bbs/topics/ANSWERS/ANS00971.html>) that colloidal silver is not recognized as a safe or effective treatment in over-the-counter products for any condition, and its manufacturers therefore cannot make drug-like claims about the product. Despite the disclaimer on the company's homepage, the flu-related site for Mesosilver (<http://www.purestcolloids.com/flu.htm>) states that the "effectiveness of colloidal silver is unparalleled" and that "Mesosilver is the most effective colloidal silver." If those are not claims about the product's effectiveness, it is hard to imagine what is.

The product's website also states that "no adverse side effects have ever been reported." However, use of colloidal silver products has long been recognized to cause argyria (<http://www.emedicine.com/derm/topic595.htm>), a permanent blue-gray discoloration of the body. The company's website claims that their product does not cause argyria because it only contains actual colloidal silver particles, as opposed to other types of silver such as silver salts. While the data on argyria focuses on particles such as silver salts, the adverse effects of the form of silver in Mesosilver have't been scientifically studied in detail.

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An abundance of products is marketed as flu remedies based on unsubstantiated claims. This underscores the importance of basing flu prevention strategies on sound science, and the importance of not trusting obscure companies to disclose adverse reactions or contraindications. Many companies are trying to cash in on the potential health crisis posed by extremely limited flu vaccine availability. Rather than relying on their unproven measures, take simple and proven preventive measures such as frequent hand washing, avoiding touching your nose and mouth, and avoiding crowds and people known to be sick with the flu.

(1) Assuming a 0.5 cc dose, diluted by 100 (1 part of flu vaccine to 99 parts of water or alcohol [as Influenzinum's website details]) 30 successive times, one dose would be spread into  $5 * 10^{59}$  cubic centimeters. The sun's volume is about  $1.4 * 10^{33}$  cubic centimeters.

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