

# Don't Let The Flu Sneak Up On You! Get Vaccinated

(NAPSA)—The Visiting Nurse Associations of America (VNAA), the nation's largest community providers of influenza vaccine, has joined leading health officials in urging all Americans aged 50 and older to get influenza vaccinations. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), adults 50 and older are at increased risk for developing influenza and related complications, including pneumonia. Nearly 90 percent of all influenza-related deaths occur among adults 50 and older.

Influenza, also known as "the flu," is responsible for more than 114,000 hospitalizations and 36,000 deaths annually in the U.S. Among people aged 65 and older, influenza is especially serious; the illness and its complications are ranked among the 10 leading causes of death for this population.

"If you are among the 47 million Americans aged 50 and older or suffer from an underlying medical condition, such as asthma or diabetes, protect yourself and get an influenza vaccination this year," says Carolyn Markey, R.N., VNAA president and chief executive officer. "So often, adults over 50 do not consider influenza a serious illness that can lead to hospitalization or even death."

In addition, it is common for adults aged 50 and older to help care for their young grandchildren who are at serious risk for contracting influenza. Recently, the CDC issued a new recommendation to vaccinate all household contacts and out-of-home caregivers of children less than 2 years of age, which can include grandparents and other family members who also may be at high risk for complications from influenza.

"Adults 50 and older may not realize the dual benefit of vaccination, which helps protect them from serious influenza-related illness and stops the spread of infection to others at high risk, such as



**The CDC recommends all Americans aged 50 and older receive an influenza vaccination this season.**

infants and young children," says Markey. "It is important for those 50 and older to understand that an annual influenza vaccination is the best way to protect themselves and their family from this very serious disease."

## Who is at High Risk?

The CDC recommends the following high-risk groups receive an annual influenza vaccination:

- Persons aged 50 years and older
- Residents of nursing homes and other long-term care facilities
- Persons with chronic medical conditions (e.g., asthma or diabetes)
- Children and adolescents receiving long-term aspirin therapy
- Women pregnant during influenza season
- Children aged 6 through 23 months
- All household contacts and out-of-home caregivers of children younger than 24 months (e.g., parents, grandparents, etc.)

Anyone who wishes to decrease his or her risk of influenza infection is also encouraged to seek annual vaccination.

## What are Symptoms of Influenza?

Many people mistake a cold for influenza; however, influenza symptoms are more severe and last several days to weeks. Common symptoms include high fever, chills, dry cough, headache, runny nose, sore throat, extreme fatigue

and muscle and joint pain.

## About Influenza Vaccination

The injectable influenza vaccine is safe and effective. The most common side effect is soreness at the vaccination site that can last up to two days. Some people may have mild fever or feel tired for a day or two after being immunized. The injectable vaccine is made from killed strains of the viruses predicted to be the main causes of influenza in the coming season. Because the viruses are dead, it's impossible to get influenza from the injectable vaccine.

The nasal vaccine is a safe and effective alternative made from a live, "attenuated" influenza virus, and is only available for healthy children and adults 5 to 49 years of age. Ask your health care provider if this vaccine is appropriate for you and your family.

## When Should You Get Vaccinated?

The best time to schedule an influenza immunization is in October or November to ensure protection before the season begins. However, it is not too late to be vaccinated in December or beyond because the influenza season often does not peak until January or later.

## About VNAA

The VNAA is the largest community provider of influenza immunizations in the nation, and the official national association for nonprofit, community-based Visiting Nurse Agencies, who care for and treat approximately four million patients each year. The nation's network of 415+ Visiting Nurse Associations employs nearly 150,000 health care professionals, and shares a nonprofit mission to provide home health and community wellness care to some of the nation's most vulnerable individuals. The VNAA's award-winning Web site contains a wide range of home health care resources and things to ask about when considering home health care. Visit [www.vnaa.org](http://www.vnaa.org) to locate a VNA nearby.