

Children's HEALTH

Children With Asthma Need To Stick With The Flu Shot

(NAPSA)—The American Lung Association (ALA) is kicking off the official start of flu season by drawing attention to the number of hospitalizations per state due to asthma that could be prevented with flu vaccinations. The analysis, based on research showing that vaccinating every asthmatic child could reduce hospital stays by nearly 60 percent, is part of an aggressive national public education campaign co-sponsored by the Lung Association and Medco Health Solutions, Inc., the nation's largest pharmacy benefits manager (PBM) based on net revenue.

"We typically don't think of influenza as a killer disease, but for people with a history of respiratory illness, including people with asthma, the chance of becoming seriously ill and requiring hospitalization is all too real," said Norman H. Edelman, M.D., scientific consultant for the American Lung Association.

Despite the risks, only 10 percent of children and 39 percent of adults with asthma get vaccinated each year, according to Edelman, who added that this low rate likely reflects earlier concerns by doctors that flu shots were unsafe for people with asthma. While this fear has since been disproved by peer-reviewed research, including a study commissioned by the Lung Association, not everyone with asthma has been fully informed.

A Special Alert

As part of its campaign to reverse this trend, the Lung Association for the first time is inserting a special alert in its annual Christmas Seal™ direct mail campaign to 11 million members about the importance of flu vacci-

**Study shows that
vaccinating every child
with asthma could
prevent nearly 100,000
hospitalizations this year.**



nations, especially for people with weakened immune systems, including the very young, the elderly and people with heart, kidney and health conditions. Also for the first time, the organization is offering a new feature on its Web site (www.lungusa.org) that enables people to type in their ZIP code or area code and find out the closest location where they can get vaccinated. The site also provides user-friendly tips for treating the flu and how to avoid getting sick in the first place.

Get The Flu Shot This Year

"Nearly 20 percent of all adults who end up in the hospital for asthma have had evidence of flu. If not for ourselves, we owe it to our families and our co-workers to get the flu shot this year so we can nip this disease in the bud," said John L. Kirkwood, president and CEO of the American Lung Association.

According to the ALA, the flu shot is the only approved form of vaccine for people in certain high-risk groups, including those with asthma and lung disease and the elderly. As part of its education campaign, the American Lung Association is cautioning the 20.3 million people with asthma and other target groups in the U.S. to "stick with the flu shot."

For more information visit www.lungusa.org.