



Health Awareness

Influenza Vaccination Season Lasts Longer Than Many Think

(NAPSA)—Each year, influenza and its related complications cause thousands of children to get sick, become hospitalized and miss school—and some even die. To help protect children from this serious disease, the National Foundation for Infectious Diseases' (NFID) Childhood Influenza Immunization Coalition (CIIC) is urging parents to schedule an influenza vaccination this winter.

"Too many children across our nation are vulnerable to influenza infection because they are not vaccinated. Annual influenza immunization is safe and it is the best way to protect our children from the most common types of the influenza virus," said Richard H. Carmona, M.D., M.P.H., FACS, CIIC Chair, 17th Surgeon General of the United States (2002-2006), President of Canyon Ranch Institute and Distinguished Professor of Public Health, The University of Arizona Mel and Enid Zuckerman College of Public Health. "It's important for all of us to help encourage the vaccination of children and their close contacts."

Influenza vaccination is especially important for children and professionals in school and childcare settings because they are in close contact with other children, which can help spread the disease very quickly. Children may also be less likely to wash their hands frequently and "cover their coughs."

"Most people don't know that the influenza season typically peaks around February, and cases continue to be common for months



It takes two weeks after vaccination to be fully protected, so plan ahead and visit www.PreventChildhoodInfluenza.org.

after that, so getting immunized throughout the winter is beneficial for children and, in fact, for everyone," said Carol J. Baker, M.D., FAAP, FIDSA, CIIC Moderator, NFID President and Professor of Pediatrics, Molecular Virology and Microbiology, Baylor College of Medicine.

It takes approximately two weeks after vaccination to be fully protected against influenza, so parents, if they haven't already, should schedule a doctor's appointment to have their child and themselves immunized. Parents should also remember to plan ahead for children under 9 years of age who are getting vaccinated against influenza for the first time or who had only one dose in prior years. These children need two doses four weeks apart to get the best protection against influenza this season.

CIIC has launched a new Web site, www.PreventChildhoodInfluenza.org, to provide parents, caregivers and health care professionals with current information about influenza and influenza vaccination. It also includes an influenza risk calculator and a link for finding local flu shot clinics.

About Influenza

Influenza is a serious and potentially deadly disease that spreads very easily. Anyone can get influenza, but rates of infection are highest among children. Each year, influenza causes more than 20,000 hospitalizations and nearly 100 deaths in American children younger than 5 years of age. To protect children from this serious and potentially deadly disease, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that all children, 6 months up to 5 years of age, be vaccinated against influenza every year.

Influenza comes on very suddenly. The symptoms usually include high fever, aches, chills, headache, cough, sore throat and a stuffy or blocked nose. Children, especially infants and toddlers, may only have fever and decreased activity or may have additional symptoms that adults usually don't experience, including ear aches, nausea and vomiting.

The Childhood Influenza Immunization Coalition initiatives are made possible through an unrestricted educational grant to NFID from sanofi pasteur. For more information on CIIC or childhood influenza, please visit www.PreventChildhoodInfluenza.org.

Note to Editors: Vaccination Recommendations:

The CDC recommends influenza vaccination every year for all children 6 months up to 5 years of age. Vaccination is also recommended for any child at least 6 months of age with certain medical conditions (e.g., asthma, diabetes, heart disease, immune deficiency). These children are at increased risk for complications from influenza.

Women who are pregnant and their household contacts should be vaccinated to protect themselves from influenza and to help ensure a healthy pregnancy and baby. Infants younger than 6 months of age cannot be vaccinated against influenza. Vaccinating pregnant women offers these infants passive immunity, but everyone who lives with or cares for these young infants needs influenza vaccine.

Despite CDC recommendations, influenza vaccination rates in children remain alarmingly low. For instance, only 20.6 percent of children 6 to 23 months of age were fully immunized for influenza during the 2005-2006 influenza season.

About NFID's Childhood Influenza Immunization Coalition:

The National Foundation for Infectious Diseases' (NFID) Childhood Influenza Immunization Coalition (CIIC) was established to protect infants, children and adolescents from influenza by communicating with "one strong voice" the need to make influenza immunization a national health priority. CIIC members represent 25 of the nation's leading public health, medical, patient and parent groups committed to protecting children's health and encouraging wellness.

About the National Foundation for Infectious Diseases:

The National Foundation for Infectious Diseases (NFID) is a non-profit, tax-exempt (501c3) organization founded in 1973 and dedicated to educating the public and health care professionals about the causes, treatment and prevention of infectious diseases. For more information, please visit www.nfid.org.