

Health Alert

Experts Say There's Still Time To Get A Flu Shot

(NAPSA)—There's good news for those who want to protect themselves and their family from the flu. There's still time to get a seasonal flu vaccination. While the seasonal flu season typically runs from October through May, activity often peaks in January or later.

According to the CDC, you should get a seasonal flu shot if you are 50 or older, have a chronic health problem—such as kidney, lung, or heart disease; diabetes, a blood disorder or asthma—live in a nursing home or other long-term care facility, are pregnant, are between 6 months and 19 years old, or live with or care for someone in a high-risk group outlined above.

While people age 50 and older are more vulnerable to seasonal flu and its complications, many older people are still not getting vaccinated. For example, seasonal flu vaccination rates are 66 percent for people 65+ and just 39 percent for people 50 to 64.

“Many myths exist about influenza vaccination, but the evidence is clear—vaccines, regardless of age, offer the best method to prevent disease,” said Dr. Cora L. Christian, a board member of AARP.

This year, the country is fighting both the regular seasonal flu and a new strain of H1N1 flu (commonly referred to as “swine flu”). A seasonal flu vaccine will not protect you against the H1N1 flu strain. There is a separate vaccine for H1N1 flu.

Groups at high risk of contracting the H1N1 flu include children and young adults up to age 24, pregnant women, people who live with or care for infants, health care workers, and 25- to 64-year-olds with cancer, blood disorders, chronic lung disease (asthma,



A seasonal flu vaccine will not protect against the H1N1 flu strain. There is a separate vaccine for H1N1 flu.

COPD), diabetes, heart disease, kidney disorders, liver disorders, neurological disorders, neuromuscular disorders or HIV, all of which can increase the severity of flu symptoms in patients.

The CDC also recommends that, as more of the H1N1 vaccine becomes available, all healthy Americans ages 25 to 64 receive it, followed by those 65 and older. According to the CDC, older Americans are less likely than younger people to get sick from the H1N1 flu virus, probably because they have immunity from an earlier exposure to a similar flu.

As more H1N1 vaccines become available, many states are giving vaccines to people over 65, and the CDC has encouraged older Americans to seek H1N1 vaccination if local supply is sufficient. If you are over 65, you should check with your health care provider or state health department to see if the H1N1 vaccine is available for you.

In addition to your doctor's office or a clinic, it's often possible to get a shot at a neighborhood supermarket or drugstore.

For more information on where to find a flu shot near you, go to www.aarp.org/flu.