

Don't Give Flu A Fighting Chance

(NAPSA)—To help keep flu viruses from sneaking into your home by way of a babysitter, child care provider, grandparent, sibling or visiting relative, build up your children's defenses by getting them vaccinated.

Here's why: Flu takes a big toll on children, especially young children. Each year in the United States, on average, 20,000 children younger than 5 years old are hospitalized and around 100 children die from seasonal flu-related complications. With the circulation of the 2009 H1N1 ("swine") influenza virus, more hospital stays and deaths among children have already been reported to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) this year than in any recent influenza season.

CDC is urging parents to get their kids—ages 6 months through 24 years old—vaccinated against H1N1 influenza.

Children under 6 months are too young to receive flu vaccine but they are among the most vulnerable to developing serious, even fatal, complications from flu. This makes vaccinating their family members and caregivers especially critical for their protection.

If you're wondering about the safety of the vaccines, know that they are very safe and cannot give you or your child the flu. CDC closely monitors all vaccines for safety with its long-established systems.

For children ages 6 months to 8 years who have never received a



Parents can build a "fort" of protection to keep their kids from influenza.

seasonal flu vaccine before, two doses are needed, spaced four weeks apart. One dose will suffice for older children. For the H1N1 flu vaccine, all children through age 9 should receive two doses.

"This year, more than ever, do all you can do to protect yourself and your children from the flu," says Dr. Anne Schuchat, director of the National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases at CDC. "The H1N1 flu virus is spreading rapidly. We're already seeing it attack otherwise healthy children, teens and young adults. So keep informed, wash your hands often, cover your coughs and sneezes, keep sick children at home and if you're sick, stay home from work and get yourself and your family vaccinated against seasonal flu and H1N1 flu."

For more information about the flu vaccines, talk to the state health department, visit www.flu.gov or call CDC at 1-800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636).