

Health Bulletin



How To Protect Against Flu

(NAPSA)—It's more important than ever to get your facts straight about flu and vaccines. This season, flu may pack more of a punch than usual because of the new 2009 H1N1 flu virus (sometimes called "swine flu").

While H1N1 is likely to be the most common flu virus this season, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) expects that regular seasonal flu viruses will cause illness as well and recommends a yearly seasonal flu vaccine as the first and most important step in protecting against seasonal influenza. A separate vaccine has been made to protect against H1N1 flu since this new virus was detected after production of the seasonal flu vaccine had already begun.

The H1N1 flu vaccine is produced in the same way as seasonal flu vaccine.

"People who do not get vaccinated are at risk for a long and serious illness and placing their close contacts at risk," says Dr. Anne Schuchat, assistant surgeon general of the U.S. Public Health Service and CDC's director of the National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases. "Flu can be especially serious for babies, young children, pregnant women, people with certain chronic medical conditions, and seniors. Influenza is not to be taken lightly."

Adults need one dose of seasonal flu vaccine and H1N1 vaccine. Children 9 years of age and younger need two doses of H1N1 flu vaccine. Children 2 years to 8 years need two doses of seasonal vaccine as well if they have never received the seasonal flu vaccine.



Ask your doctor about flu vaccination.

You can get either a flu shot (for people 6 months and older) or a nasal spray vaccine (for healthy people 2 through 49 who are not pregnant). Flu vaccines are very safe and closely monitored for any potential side effects. Influenza vaccines cannot give you the flu.

Both flu viruses are thought to spread mostly from person to person through coughs and sneezes. You can also get sick by touching something with flu viruses on it and then touching your eyes, mouth or nose. Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze and wash your hands often with soap and water. Avoid close contact with people who are sick.

For people who are very sick from flu, anti-viral drugs can help if administered early. Fight the flu by following the CDC's three-step approach: vaccination, preventive actions and anti-viral drugs.

For more information, visit www.flu.gov or call 1 (800) CDC-INFO (800-232-4636).