



## Baby Boomers Need Flu Vaccine

(NAPSA)—Katie Couric and Bryant Gumbel have news for you: They are baby boomers and are recommended to get the flu vaccine this year and every year.

Influenza (the flu) kills. Every year in the United States, an average of 36,000 Americans die from flu-related complications and about 200,000 people are hospitalized. Baby boomers are getting to the age when the risk for flu complications, including serious illness, hospitalization and even death, goes up. For this reason, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that all people 50 and older get an annual flu shot as the first and most important step in protecting against this serious disease.

Many people 50 and older have chronic illnesses, such as diabetes or heart disease, that place them at greater risk of serious flu-related complications if they get the flu. Fortunately, there is a safe and effective vaccine against influenza that can prevent illness and reduce serious flu-related outcomes such as hospitalization and death.

And what many people don't know is that flu can be passed to others even before symptoms develop.

"Flu is not to be taken lightly. People who do not get the flu vaccine are taking two risks: First, they risk a potentially serious case of the flu. And second, if they get sick, they risk passing it to family, friends and co-workers," says Dr. Anne Schuchat, director of the National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases at CDC. "The latter can be especially dangerous for people at high risk of serious, flu-related complications and death."

CDC also recommends vaccination for children 6 months



**Because influenza is contagious, an infected person can easily spread it with a cough or sneeze.**

through 18 years of age; pregnant women; people of all ages with chronic health conditions such as asthma, diabetes or heart or lung disease; and anyone who lives in a nursing home or long-term care facility. In addition, people who live with or care for anyone in a high-risk group should get a flu vaccine to protect their high-risk contact.

Scientists monitor the ever-changing flu viruses worldwide and a new flu vaccine is produced each year. The vaccine can protect you from getting sick from these viruses, or it can make your illness milder if you get a different flu virus.

"Vaccination is the single best way to protect yourself and the people you love from influenza," explains Dr. Schuchat. CDC recommends that vaccination begin as soon as vaccine is available and continue into December and beyond. Getting the vaccine later in the season can still provide protection against influenza, as flu season can continue into the spring.

Find out when or where to get a flu vaccine by contacting your doctor or health department.

To learn more, call CDC at 800-CDC-INFO or visit [www.cdc.gov/flu](http://www.cdc.gov/flu).