

HEALTH ALERT!

Protect Yourself—Get A Flu Shot

(NAPSA)—The big question of how to avoid the flu has an answer as tiny as the point of a needle—the one that provides your flu vaccination.

It's necessary because more people die of the flu in the U.S. than all other vaccine-preventable diseases combined, according to a study by the National Foundation for Infectious Diseases (NFID).

As the experts explain, 200,000 people end up in the hospital every year because of the flu, and 36,000 of them die. These deaths might have been prevented.

Flu season, which lasts from about October through May, is when most people are at high risk of getting the flu.

You are at increased risk of getting the flu if you:

- are 50 or older;
- live or work in a nursing home or facilities where people are chronically ill;
- have a chronic health problem like diabetes, kidney, lung or heart disease, anemia, a blood disorder or asthma;
- have an illness like HIV/AIDS or get medical treatment, like chemotherapy, that weakens your immunity and keeps you from fighting infections;
- are a health care worker; or
- are taking care of or living with someone in a high-risk group mentioned above.

While people 50 and older are more likely to get the flu, many



You can protect yourself and your family by getting a flu shot.

older people are still not getting the vaccinations against both the flu and pneumonia. Just 36 percent of 50- to 64-year-olds received a flu shot last year, according to NFID.

“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.

In addition to getting a flu shot annually, experts encourage all Americans 65 and older to get vaccinated against pneumonia each year. Pneumonia can cause serious illness, such as sepsis and meningitis, which can lead to death.

Medicare, the primary insurer for people 65 and older, will pay for both the flu and pneumonia vaccinations.

For information on where to find a flu clinic nearby, visit <http://www.aarp.org/flu> or call 1-888-OUR-AARP (1-888-687-2277).