



Health Awareness

Prevent Influenza. Get Vaccinated!

(NAPSA)—As many as one in five Americans is infected with influenza, a serious respiratory disease, every year. Now is the time to protect yourself and your family from this severe and sometimes deadly illness.

Vaccination is the best way to prevent the spread of the influenza virus each season. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) urge anyone who wishes to reduce their risk for the flu to get vaccinated now.

Influenza immunization is especially important for people 50 years of age and older, children 6 months up to 5 years of age, anyone with a chronic health condition (such as asthma or diabetes) and pregnant women. Close contacts of these groups (like health care workers, parents, siblings, grandparents and babysitters) should also get influenza vaccination.

Experts are predicting that more than 100 million doses of influenza vaccine will be available this year—more than ever before. Influenza normally does not peak until February each year, and vaccination is still beneficial even when the flu begins to be seen in your area.

CDC recommends that anyone desiring to avoid influenza should get vaccinated. Influenza vaccination still remains the best way to prevent influenza, and health care providers should vac-



inate every person meeting the criteria for receiving influenza vaccination. This recommendation is particularly important for health care workers and others in close contact with persons at high risk for influenza complications.

“Now is the time to make sure you and your loved ones are protected against influenza and its serious complications, which can include pneumonia,” said National Foundation for Infectious Diseases (NFID) Medical Director Susan J. Rehm, MD. “Getting immunized will help prevent missed work and school days, as well as trips to the doctor or hospital caused by the influenza virus.”

NFID recently did a survey of Americans and found that many believe that by December it is too late to get vaccinated. This is alarming because vaccination should continue throughout the winter to help prevent spreading the illness among friends, family and coworkers.

“Getting vaccinated each season is important because the influenza viruses change every year,” said LJ Tan, PhD, Cochair of the National Influenza Vaccine Summit. “A new influenza vaccine is made before each season to help provide the best protection.”

About Influenza

Influenza symptoms can include fever (usually high), dry cough, headache, runny or stuffy nose, sore throat and muscle aches. It also can cause extreme tiredness that may last days or weeks.

Anyone can get the influenza virus. It is spread from person to person, mostly by coughing and sneezing. People (including young children) can spread the virus to others before symptoms appear and for many days after they begin.

Although vaccination is the first line of defense against influenza, prescription antiviral medications may be helpful in preventing and controlling the spread of influenza. Antivirals can also be used for those who cannot receive influenza vaccine because of egg allergies.

For More Information

To learn more, talk to your health care professional or visit the NFID Web site, www.nfid.org, CDC Web site, www.cdc.gov, or the National Influenza Vaccine Summit Web site, www.PreventInfluenza.org.