

HEALTH ALERT!

There's Still Time To Protect Yourself And Your Kids Against Influenza



(NAPSA)—If you think it's too late for you and your kids to stave off the discomforts and possible serious complications of the flu, you're in for some good news. While October and November are optimal months for getting vaccinated, receiving the flu vaccine anytime through December and beyond can still be beneficial, as the flu season can last as late as May.

"Children count on their parents and guardians for the best possible care, and getting them vaccinated against influenza is the single best way to protect them against this serious illness," says an official at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), adding that the vaccine is safe, effective and cannot cause the flu.

Each year in the United States, on average, more than 20,000 children and tens of thousands of adults are hospitalized due to complications of influenza, and some die from the disease. The CDC recommends that beginning at 6 months of age and up to their fifth birthday, children get a flu vaccine each year.

Children under the age of 5, even if they are healthy, are among those at highest risk for flu-related complications such as seizures and ear infections. Deaths may also occur in children,

but are less common. Kids of any age with chronic illnesses such as asthma, heart disease and diabetes are particularly vulnerable. The children at highest risk for flu complications are infants under 6 months. These infants are too young to receive the flu vaccine, but their parents, other family members and out-of-home caregivers can help protect them by getting vaccinated.

The flu, which can cause symptoms including high fever, headache, cough, nausea, weakness and muscle aches, is contagious and often transmitted through sneezing and coughing. While some people suffer mild symptoms, others are too ill to work or attend school.

Children should get age-appropriate vaccines through their local health clinic or pediatrician. Individuals who received the vaccine last year likely won't be protected from this year's influenza because the flu viruses change from year to year, which is why the flu vaccine is updated annually.

To find out when or where to get a vaccine, contact your doctor or local health department. To find a clinic near you, visit www.flucliniclocator.org and enter your zip code.

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