

# HEALTH ALERT!

## Help Protect Your Family From Influenza With A Flu Vaccination

(NAPSA)—Every year in the United States, an estimated 15 to 60 million people suffer from influenza, more commonly known as the flu. While many consider the flu “just a bad cold,” in reality, each year in the U.S., more than 200,000 people are hospitalized from flu complications and approximately 36,000 people die from the flu.

For the more than 50 million people who care for family members in the U.S., the flu can pose a threat on many levels. Not only must you worry about your own health, but you must also avoid transmitting the flu to your loved one. And if that weren't reason enough to be concerned, just ask this question: “Who will care for my loved one if I am too sick to do so?”

Family caregivers know that the challenges and stress of caregiving take a toll. Research has shown that because of the stress that often accompanies family caregiving, the immune system is impacted, making one more prone to illness. But when a caregiver is sick, his or her loved one's well-being is also at risk. That is why it is so important to get vaccinated against the flu—to help protect yourself and prevent transmitting the flu.

“Getting vaccinated against the flu is part of being a conscientious family caregiver,” states

### Preventing The Flu: Simple Things You Can Do

- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing
- Wash your hands often—especially before and after assisting your loved one
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth
- Stay away from others who have the flu
- Get a flu vaccination each year



### While flu activity can vary by region, flu vaccines administered after November are beneficial.

Suzanne Mintz, president and co-founder of the National Family Caregivers Association. “Not only must you worry about your own health and well-being, you also need to consider its impact on your ability to provide adequate care, and the possibility that you might transmit the disease to your care recipient.”

Many people in need of chronic care are classified as high risk for the flu by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). These groups include the elderly, young children and people with chronic illnesses. Vaccination is valuable for everyone, but it is especially important for those who are considered high risk to get a flu vaccination. In addition, it is recommended that any person in

close contact with someone in a high-risk group get vaccinated.

According to the CDC and its Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), flu activity can begin to increase as early as October or November, but in the majority of recent flu seasons, has not reached peak levels until late December through early March. While the timing of flu activity can vary by region, flu vaccines administered after November are beneficial.

### Protect Your Health

Getting vaccinated against the flu can be a lifesaver for you and those you love. To learn more, visit the following Web sites:

- [www.cdc.gov/flu](http://www.cdc.gov/flu)
- [www.thefamilycaregiver.org](http://www.thefamilycaregiver.org)
- [www.healthywomen.org](http://www.healthywomen.org)

