

Squash the Flu Bug This and Every Season!

*Well-known Psychologist Dr. Joyce Brothers Says
"The Best Advice I've Got is For You to Get a Flu Shot"*

(NAPSA)—Influenza causes serious illness and even death, particularly among Americans over 65 years of age. But the disease is vaccine-preventable so there is no reason anyone should get the flu. In fact, you can squash the flu bug right in its tracks by asking your health care provider for a flu shot each and every flu season.

The National Foundation for Infectious Diseases (NFID) has joined forces with Dr. Joyce Brothers, America's well-known psychologist and dispenser of health-conscious advice, to issue a public health alert about the severe risks associated with influenza and the importance of annual vaccination.

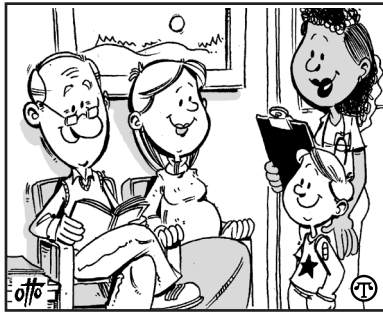
"For years I've counseled Americans on ways to live happier, healthier lives and getting a flu shot is a simple way to protect you and your family's health," says Dr. Brothers. "I encourage every family to make flu vaccination a part of their annual health routine."

New research shows that influenza is responsible for more than 114,000 hospitalizations and 36,000 deaths annually—more deaths than AIDS. Vaccination is especially important for those at risk for influenza-related complications including the elderly and those with chronic illnesses. Family members should get vaccinated against influenza to avoid transmitting the flu to another member in their household.

"Influenza is a very serious disease that can keep you and your family out of work and school for days if not protected," says Dr. William Schaffner, M.D., of NFID, and professor and chairman of the Department of Preventive Medicine at Vanderbilt University School of Medicine. "Flu immunization is most important for those at risk for complications from influenza, and we encourage these groups, as well as anyone wishing to avoid the flu, to seek vaccination beginning in October."

Are You at Risk for Complications From the Flu?

Groups considered at risk for



Health officials recommend annual flu vaccination for those at increased risk for influenza-related complications including the elderly and those with chronic illnesses such as diabetes or asthma.

developing serious influenza-related complications include the elderly; adults and children with chronic diseases such as asthma and diabetes; and pregnant women who will be in their second or third trimester of pregnancy during the influenza season. Influenza vaccination is also recommended for those 50 to 64 years of age, household contacts of at-risk individuals and health care workers who care for at-risk patients.

The CDC now encourages vaccination for healthy children aged 6 to 23 months, as they have an increased risk of influenza-related hospitalizations. Children younger than 9 years receiving influenza vaccine for the first time require two doses, one month apart.

Anyone who wishes to decrease his or her risk of influenza infection is also encouraged to seek vaccination.

When Should You Get Vaccinated?

You should seek a flu vaccination beginning in October through December. Since the flu season peaks between January and March, getting immunized in December and beyond is still beneficial.

Who Should Not Get Vaccinated?

The only people who should

not receive a flu shot are those who have had previous reactions to the vaccine or people allergic to eggs (the viruses used in the vaccine are grown in eggs) or egg products. Adults with a fever should wait until symptoms disappear or should consult a health care provider about receiving the vaccine. However, the vaccine may be given to children with mild upper respiratory tract infections or those with minor illnesses with or without fever.

How Influenza Spreads

Influenza viruses are spread into the air by sneezing and coughing. The virus can also be spread by direct contact with people who have the flu. People who get the flu experience a high fever, chills, a dry cough, headache, runny nose, sore throat, muscle and joint pain, and extreme fatigue lasting several days to weeks.

About the Influenza Vaccine

Influenza vaccine is safe and effective. The most common side effect is soreness at the vaccination site that can last up to two days. Some people may have mild fever or feel tired for a day or two after receiving the influenza vaccine. Influenza vaccine is made from killed strains of the viruses predicted to be the main causes of influenza in the coming season. Because the viruses are dead, it is impossible to get influenza from the vaccine.

For Vaccine Information

For more information about influenza and vaccination, contact your physician or local health care provider, or visit the CDC Web site at www.cdc.gov or the NFID Web site at www.nfid.org.

National Foundation for Infectious Diseases

Founded in 1973, NFID is a non-profit organization dedicated to public and professional educational programs about, and in support of, research into causes, treatment and prevention of infectious diseases.