



# spotlight on health

## Flu Season Is On Its Way. Get Ready, Get Vaccinated!

(NAPSA)—If you have not already received your flu shot, now's the time. Flu season begins in October and peaks between February and March. Influenza, or "flu," is responsible for approximately 36,000 deaths each year in the United States, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

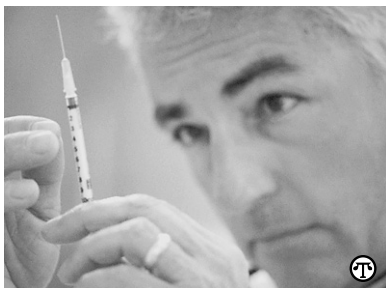
### Minimizing Your Risk

By far the most effective way to protect yourself from the flu is to be vaccinated each year in the fall. Because the flu virus changes from year to year, everyone who wants to be protected needs to be re-vaccinated annually.

"Almost anyone (over the age of six months) who wants to improve their chances of having a flu-free winter can benefit from immunization. On average, the flu shot will reduce your chances of getting the flu by approximately 70-90 percent," according to Rite Aid pharmacist Sarah Matunis, R.Ph. "It takes 14 days to work, so make sure to get your flu shot *before* you get sick."

Flu vaccinations are especially important for:

- People 50 years of age and older
- Adults and children with chronic heart and lung disease
- Anyone living in a nursing home or long-term care facility
- People with chronic conditions such as diabetes, anemia, cancer, immune suppression, HIV or kidney disease
- Health care workers and other care givers capable of transmitting to at-risk groups
- Women who will be more than three months pregnant during the flu season



### What If I React to the Vaccine?

The vaccine acts to stimulate your immune system and prepare your body to resist infection. The flu shot uses an inactivated or "killed" vaccine; it can't give you the flu. However, like other vaccines, the flu vaccine can occasionally cause a reaction, which is not unusual. If you do experience a reaction, it's normally local and mild—redness, soreness, and swelling at the injection site within six to 12 hours after the vaccination, which may last a day or two.

"Fever and more generalized aches and pains can occur but are less likely. To treat a mild reaction to a flu shot, use over-the-counter medication for fever, swelling, and aches and pains," recommended Matunis. "Do not give aspirin to children; use another medication to relieve their fever or aches and pains. If fever is high and symptoms persist, talk with your doctor."

According to Matunis, Rite Aid pharmacists can also help you prepare for cold and flu season with advice on vitamins to help keep you healthy and over-the-counter products to relieve symptoms. In addition, Rite Aid offers vaccinations in approximately 800 stores. Visit [www.riteaid.com](http://www.riteaid.com) for more information.