

Health Bulletin



Flu Vaccination = Your Best Protection

(NAPSA)—For people with certain medical conditions, the flu can be particularly serious and lead to a worsening of chronic health conditions. Complications can include pneumonia, bronchitis, sinus infections, ear infections. For example, people with asthma who have flu may experience asthma attacks, and people with congestive heart failure may experience a deterioration of this condition triggered by the flu, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

“People at high risk for complications from influenza cannot afford to take flu lightly. Both seasonal flu and 2009 H1N1 flu [sometimes called “swine flu”] viruses are serious, and people with underlying medical conditions need to know that vaccination is the best defense,” says Dr. Anne Schuchat, director of CDC’s National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases.

Schuchat explains that the majority of fatalities from both 2009 H1N1 and seasonal flu are among people with underlying medical conditions. These conditions can include chronic lung diseases, asthma, diabetes, heart disease, kidney disorders, blood disorders, cancer, neurodevelopmental conditions or a weakened immune system, among many others. A complete list of conditions is available at www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/risks.htm. While there is little seasonal flu vaccine remaining, CDC continues to encourage those at highest risk from flu complications to seek seasonal flu vaccine, in addition to receiving 2009 H1N1 vaccine, as recommended.

If you have any high-risk medical conditions and develop flu-like symptoms, you should call



According to the CDC, vaccination is your best defense against influenza—both the seasonal flu and the H1N1 strain.

your health care provider and seek medical care immediately. Unless your provider says not to, keep taking your medications for your medical conditions. Your doctor may recommend that you take anti-viral drugs that can reduce your symptoms and help prevent serious flu complications. Anti-viral drugs work best when administered within 48 hours of the onset of influenza symptoms.

Beyond flu vaccination, you should also take everyday preventive actions to protect yourself from flu. Wash your hands often with soap and water; avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth; cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze; avoid contact with sick people; and stay home when sick.

Don’t let the flu into the mix this season. Get vaccinated. For more information, talk to your state health department, visit www.flu.gov, www.cdc.gov/flu and www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu or contact CDC at (800) CDC-INFO (800-232-4636).