



CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION

Press Release

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CDC Announces Weeklong Event to Focus on the Importance of Influenza Vaccination

77 Million Doses of Vaccine Supply Delivered, with Record Numbers Expected by End of Year

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) today announced the designation of the week after Thanksgiving as National Influenza Vaccination Week. This year, National Influenza Vaccination Week will run from November 27 to December 3. This event is designed to raise awareness of the importance of continuing influenza (flu) vaccination, as well as foster greater use of flu vaccine through the months of November, December and beyond. CDC is recommending that people take this opportunity to be vaccinated and is hopeful that flu vaccine providers will use this time to enhance flu vaccine availability by scheduling additional clinics; extending clinic hours; and enabling a larger role for mass vaccination at places such as retail locations.

“Getting vaccinated is the single best way for people to protect not only themselves against flu, but their loved ones as well,” said Dr. Julie Gerberding, CDC Director. “National interest in getting a flu vaccination has traditionally tapered off after Thanksgiving. Since flu activity typically does not peak until February or later, November and December are also good times to be vaccinated. National Influenza Vaccination Week is an excellent opportunity for providers to utilize their resources to help fully realize the potential of influenza vaccination.”

As National Influenza Vaccination Week approaches, 77 million flu vaccine doses have already been distributed and vaccine supply is expected to reach an all-time high. Flu vaccine manufacturers have reported they expect 110 – 115 million doses of flu vaccine to be distributed this year. This is at least 27 – 32 million more doses than have been distributed in any past season and 29 - 34 million more doses than were distributed last year.

“Influenza vaccination can provide protection to a wide number of people, and is an important factor in minimizing the risk and severity of flu transmission,” said Dr. John Agwunobi, Assistant Secretary for Health. “Most people recover completely from a bout with the flu, but it does cause misery for a week or

more and makes people unable to work, attend school, care for children, and participate in activities they enjoy. By vaccinating a greater number of people, it will help many more to be free of discomforting symptoms and not miss out on their everyday activities.”

According to CDC’s Immunization Services Division, progress on vaccine production and distribution has so far met expectations, which should enable most providers to begin vaccinating very soon, if they have not done so already.

“Doses are still shipping and will continue to be shipped through November and into early December,” said Dr. Gerberding. “The good news is that plenty of vaccine will be out there. We are already hearing from providers who are anxious to get their complete orders of flu vaccine and vaccinate their patients this season – and that is wonderful.”

Vaccinations are recommended for anyone who wants to decrease the risk of influenza. While anyone can get influenza—and the infection can be severe—many groups, including people aged 50 years or more, those with chronic illnesses (heart disease, lung disease, kidney disease, diabetes), and pregnant women, are at highest risk for complications. In addition, those in close contact with these high risk persons, such as health care personnel, and healthy household contacts and caregivers of high risk persons, are also at increased risk and should get vaccinated.

For the first time, CDC is also recommending children aged 24 months to 59 months be vaccinated, since they are also considered at risk for complications of flu. Previously, the recommendation was limited to children aged 6 months to 23 months, who are nearly as likely to be hospitalized for complications due to flu as those aged 65 years and older. Children aged 24 months to 59 months are not as likely to be hospitalized as younger children, but are more likely than older, healthy children to see a physician or visit an emergency room for flu.

Each year in the United States, between 5 and 20 percent of the population is infected with influenza, about 36,000 people die and more than 200,000 people are hospitalized because of influenza complications. Since influenza is unpredictable, and different types and strains of influenza circulate throughout the flu season, the CDC’s Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) recommends that influenza vaccine be offered throughout the influenza season-- even after influenza has appeared or begun appearing in a community.

For more information about influenza and influenza vaccine visit www.cdc.gov/flu.

National Influenza Vaccination Week is a collaborative effort of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, including the CDC, and the National Influenza Vaccine Summit (for more information about the Summit, please go to <http://www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/category/13732.html>).

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Department of Health and Human Services