

HEALTH ALERT!

Baby Boomers 50+ Advised to Get Flu Vaccine™

(NAPSA)—Baby boomers turning 50 or older this year should do more than consider the merits of the influenza vaccine; they should get one. This is the recommendation of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), which advises adults 50 and older to protect themselves from this contagious disease that can lead to hospitalization and even death by getting the flu shot every year.

"Influenza is a serious illness," cautions Dr. Jeanne Santoli, Associate Director of Science at the CDC's Immunization Services Division. "Each year in the United States, on average, more than 200,000 people are hospitalized from flu complications and about 36,000 die from the flu."

The flu, which can cause symptoms including high fever, headache, cough, nausea, weakness and muscle aches, is contagious. Often, it is transmitted through sneezing and coughing, and healthy adults may be able to pass on the flu before they know they are sick, as well as while they are sick.

Although some people suffer only mild symptoms from influenza and are ill for a few days, others are incapacitated by the flu for up to two weeks and unable to attend work or school or even care for their children. Some

people become so critically ill that they require hospitalization; and some people die from flu complications like pneumonia, dehydration and deteriorating chronic medical conditions, such as congestive heart failure, asthma or diabetes.

Getting a flu vaccine is the single best way to protect against influenza, says Santoli. October or November is the best time to get vaccinated, but getting vaccinated in December and beyond can still be beneficial, as the flu season can last until May.

People at high risk for serious influenza-related complications should get vaccinated each year, says Santoli. She adds that people who received the vaccine last year likely won't be protected from this year's influenza viruses because flu viruses change each year. That is why the flu vaccine is updated annually. Santoli emphasizes that the vaccine is safe and effective and cannot cause the flu.

To find out when or where to get a flu vaccine, contact your doctor or local health department. You can also find a clinic near you by visiting the Web site www.flucliniclocator.org and entering your zip code.

To learn more, call CDC at 1-800-CDC-INFO or visit www.cdc.gov/flu.