

HEALTH ALERT!

Dr. Joyce Brothers Urges High-Risk Americans To Get A Flu Shot *Healthy Persons Should Get Vaccinated in November and December*

(NAPSA)—Dr. Joyce Brothers, America's well-known psychologist, has counseled us for years on ways to live happier, healthier lives. There are many things in life she says are beyond our control, but there are some things we *can* help control—like preventing influenza with an annual flu shot.

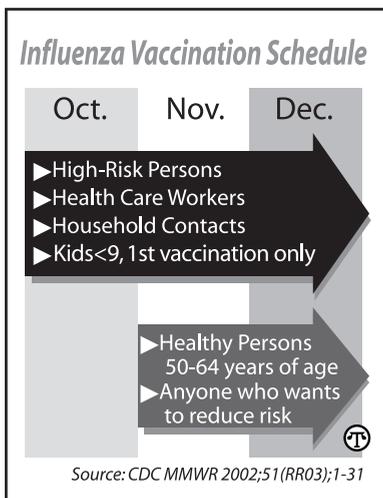
"The best advice I can give is to get a flu shot, and if you are over the age of 65 or have a chronic illness, please get vaccinated before influenza hits," says Dr. Brothers, who has teamed up with the Visiting Nurse Associations of America (VNAA) to remind Americans to get vaccinated. "One simple shot can help prevent the flu and help protect your body and well-being."

Health officials have issued a flu vaccination schedule that prioritizes the vaccine for those who need it most. If you're at high risk, you should get a flu shot as soon as you can. If you are not at high risk, get vaccinated in November or December. Vaccination during these months will help ensure you are protected before the flu season peaks sometime between January and March.

Who's at High Risk for the Flu?

Each year, thousands of Americans die from complications of influenza, particularly the following who are at high risk:

- People aged 65 and older
- Adults and children with chronic medical conditions (asthma, diabetes, HIV)
- Healthy children aged 6 to 23 months



The CDC issued an influenza vaccination schedule to help prioritize the vaccine for those who need it first.

- Those who care for or live with high-risk persons
- All health care workers
- Children under 9 years of age who are receiving vaccine for the first time
- Persons aged 6 months to 18 years who are receiving long-term aspirin therapy
- Pregnant women in the second or third trimester of pregnancy during the influenza season

Effects of the Flu

The flu often results in more severe complications than those of the common cold. Flu-related complications are responsible for an average of 20,000 deaths per year and an additional 114,000 hospitalizations.

About the Vaccine

You cannot get the flu from the vaccine. Manufacturers make the vaccine with killed strains of the viruses, which are predicted to be the most prominent in the upcoming season. It is important to be immunized annually against influenza, because the vaccine changes each year to match the strains expected to circulate during the coming season. As with any vaccine, a flu shot may not protect 100 percent of susceptible individuals.

Who Should Not Get a Flu Shot?

The viruses used in the vaccines are grown in chicken eggs. If you are allergic to eggs or egg products or if you have had previous reactions to the vaccine, you should not be immunized against the flu. The most common side effect is soreness at the injection site, which can last up to two days.

Vaccine Information

For more information on influenza vaccination, contact your physician or local public health department, or visit the CDC's Web site at www.cdc.gov.

Visiting Nurse Associations of America

The Visiting Nurse Associations of America, created in 1983, is the official national association for freestanding, not-for-profit, community-based home health organizations known as Visiting Nurse Associations. VNAA represents almost 200 VNAs in over 400 locations across the country.