

A Children's B D E F G H Health

For Kids, The Flu Is More Than A Runny Nose

(NAPSA)—As the cold and flu season nears, parents are getting prepared for the sniffles, days home from school and visits to the doctor. But before parents head to the pharmacy to stock their medicine cabinets, they should head to the doctor's office to get themselves and their kids an annual influenza or "flu" vaccine.

Most Americans underestimate the severity of the flu. Each year, about 20,000 children younger than 5 years old are hospitalized due to flu, and some even die from serious complications.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends vaccination as the best way to protect children against the flu. Not only does vaccination help protect children from getting the flu, but it also helps stop the spread of the virus to others at school and home; and the flu vaccine is safe and effective and cannot cause the flu.

With more vaccine available this year than ever before, CDC officials say vaccination for children, especially those ages 6 months to 5 years and those with certain chronic health conditions such as asthma or diabetes, should be a top priority. Because infants under 6 months are too young for vaccination, the CDC recommends protecting them by having every member of the household and all of the infant's caregivers vaccinated.

A second dose of flu vaccine is required for children ages 6 months to 8 years who are getting vaccinated for the first time. The



Children and anyone who lives with or cares for them should be vaccinated against the flu every year.

second dose must be given four to six weeks after the first.

The flu, which can cause symptoms such as high fever, headache, coughing, nausea, weakness and muscle aches, can easily spread when an infected person coughs or sneezes near others.

Because different influenza viruses circulate each year, a new flu vaccine must be made each year to fight these viruses, which is why it is important to get a flu vaccine *every* year.

Timing for flu vaccination is critical, as the flu typically peaks in January or later. It takes about two weeks to build immunity to the flu after vaccination. That's why vaccination is encouraged as soon as vaccine becomes available in your community, or anytime between September and January or later.

To learn when or where to get a flu vaccine, contact your doctor or local health department. For more information, call CDC at 1-800-CDC-INFO or visit www.cdc.gov/flu.