

# Health Bulletin

## Older Americans among Groups Hardest Hit by Flu: Flu Vaccine Is the Best Protection Ⓣ

(NAPSA)—As the nation prepares for the first wave of seasonal influenza this winter, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is recommending the flu vaccine to people over 6 months old, especially those 65 and older who are at high risk for grave complications from the flu. According to CDC, the flu vaccine is the single best way to protect against this serious disease and its possible complications that can lead to hospitalization and even death.

Each year in the United States, on average, more than 200,000 people are hospitalized because of complications from the flu and 36,000 people die from this disease.

The flu, which causes symptoms including high fever, headache, coughing, nausea, weakness and muscle aches, spreads easily from person to person. 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.

The reason for attention on Americans age 65 and older according to CDC officials, is that they often have chronic health conditions such as heart disease, asthma, diabetes, kidney disease and cancer, which means they are

at greater risk for complications from the flu. Complications can include bacterial pneumonia, dehydration and worsening of chronic health conditions. The flu vaccine can help prevent secondary complications and reduce the chance for influenza-related hospitalization and death among persons in this age group.

Timing for flu shots is critical and the CDC recommends getting a flu vaccine in October or November, but vaccination in December and beyond can still be beneficial as flu season can last as late as May.

The shot is safe and effective and cannot cause the flu. With adequate supplies, anyone age 65 and older who wants protection from influenza should get a shot, even if they got one last year. People vaccinated last year are not likely to be protected from this year's influenza since the virus changes each year. That is why the vaccine is updated annually.

To find out when or where to get a shot, people are encouraged to contact their doctor or local health department. They may also find a nearby clinic by visiting the Web site, [www.flucliniclocator.org](http://www.flucliniclocator.org), and entering their zip code.

To learn more, call CDC at 1-800-CDC-INFO or visit [www.cdc.gov/flu](http://www.cdc.gov/flu).