



Health Awareness

The Flu Vaccine: The Must-Have Accessory With Your Little Black Dress

(NAPSA)—Jennifer Garner gets one every year. So does Amanda Peet. No, it's not the latest designer bag, trendiest shoes or even a personal trainer. It's the flu vaccine.

Adding a flu vaccination to your list of "must haves"—along with the perfect little black dress for the office party or your next social gathering—can help protect you (and your loved ones) against the potentially deadly influenza virus.

If you've ever had the flu, you know that it can knock you off your feet for a week or longer. Plus, passing it on to family, friends and co-workers can seriously curb your popularity. But what you may not know is that each year, complications from the flu kill an average of 36,000 Americans. And about 200,000 others, on average, end up in the hospital, including some 20,000 children younger than 5 years old. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) says that these numbers should be a wake-up call for all Americans.

"Influenza is not to be taken lightly. People who do not get the flu vaccine are taking two risks: First, they risk a potentially long and serious case of the flu and, second, they risk passing the flu to others," says Dr. Anne Schuchat, director of CDC's National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases. "The latter can be especially dangerous for people at high risk of serious flu-related complications, including death. These people are children younger than 5 years old; pregnant women; people 65 or older; and people with chronic illnesses including asthma, diabetes and heart disease."



If you're thinking that you do not have time to get a flu vaccine and will risk getting sick with the flu and suffering through fever, headache, dry coughing, weakness and muscle aches, please think again.

Dangerous complications of flu can include pneumonia, dehydration and worsening of chronic medical conditions.

While it's smart to avoid close contact with others who are sick and to wash your hands often with soap and warm water to keep from getting sick, according to CDC, getting a flu vaccine is the first and most important step you can take to protect yourself and your loved ones against this serious disease.

To find out when or where to get a flu vaccine, contact your doctor or health department. To learn more, call CDC at (800) CDC-INFO or visit www.cdc.gov/flu.