

CDC Urges: Physician, Vaccinate Thyself

BY HEIDI SPLETE
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WASHINGTON — Doctors, get your flu shots.

Get vaccinated for your patients, do it for yourselves, “do it in droves, just do it,” William Schaffner, M.D., of the National Foundation for Infectious Diseases, said at a press conference.

Julie L. Gerberding, M.D., director of the Centers for Disease Control and Pre-

vention (CDC), stressed the importance of influenza vaccination for everyone.

“We can never predict what the season will look like, when it will start, or how severe it will be,” she said. “We want to emphasize the one thing we know for sure, which is that flu vaccine saves lives, and it is the very best way to prevent flu.”

“This year, we want to make sure that we get vaccine to the people who need it the most, first,” Dr. Gerberding said. “That’s why we are recommending that

those people who are in high-priority groups get vaccinated now.”

The following groups should receive the trivalent inactivated influenza vaccine in this order, the CDC recommended:

- ▶ People aged 65 years and older with comorbid conditions, such as heart disease, asthma, diabetes, HIV, and neuromuscular conditions that affect the respiratory system, such as spinal cord injuries.
- ▶ Long-term care residents.
- ▶ People aged 2-64 years with comorbid

conditions.

- ▶ People aged 65 years and older without comorbid conditions.
- ▶ Children aged 6-23 months.
- ▶ Pregnant women.

The following groups also were designated as priority; however, they may be vaccinated with trivalent inactivated influenza vaccine or the live attenuated influenza vaccine:

- ▶ Health care workers providing direct patient care.
- ▶ Caregivers and household contacts of children younger than 6 months or of someone who is severely immunocompromised.

After October 24, anyone who wants a flu shot can have one, and doctors should encourage their patients to get vaccinated and schedule clinics and patient visits accordingly.

Among those who should be vaccinat-



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Get vaccinated for your patients, do it for yourselves, ‘do it in droves, just do it.’

DR. SCHAFFNER

ed on October 1: all health care workers.

“Every single doctor and nurse in America needs to make getting vaccinated a priority,” said Ardis D. Hoven, M.D., an infectious disease specialist and representative of the American Medical Association.

“Every year, only two of five health care workers received flu vaccination,” said Jeanne Santoli, M.D., of the National Immunization Program at the CDC. “By vaccinating them, we can protect them and the priority patients that they see. FluMist is a great way to protect health care workers and the household contacts of children less than 6 months of age.”

Except for the few people who work with mostly immunocompromised patients, such as HIV patients or transplant patients, data suggest that FluMist is a safe choice for health care workers who meet the criteria of being healthy, not pregnant, and younger than 64 years, she noted.

“This vaccine [FluMist] is not subject to the tiered approach. It can be used at any time, and if we use this vaccine for health care workers, we can spare doses of the flu shot for more people in the priority groups,” she said.

“When health care professionals ignore vaccine recommendations, the risk of transmission increases significantly,” she said. Conversely, studies have shown that vaccination of health care professionals has been associated with fewer deaths among nursing home patients.

Lack of time is the main reason health care workers don’t get vaccinated, and making the vaccine conveniently available in the workplace could make a big difference. “Without a scheduled time to get the vaccine, it is easily overlooked, but a few minutes provides a season of protection,” she said.

* Comparison based on whey/casein ratio of typical mature breast milk (15 days to 6 months after birth).

† Enfamil Gentlease LIPIL contains ~1/4 of carbohydrates from lactose vs 100% in a full-lactose, routine, milk-based formula.

‡ Based on a study comparing Enfamil LIPIL® infant formula with Enfamil® with Iron infant formula.

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