

Influenza Vaccination Now Recommended for Children 6 months to 18 years of Age

[Announcer] This podcast is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDC — safer, healthier people.

[Karen Hunter] I'm Karen Hunter at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta. The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices, or ACIP, is meeting on February 27 and 28, 2008, to discuss current immunization schedules. The ACIP is made up of experts in fields associated with immunization who have been selected by the Secretary of the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services to provide advice and guidance to the CDC on the control of vaccine-preventable diseases. With me today is Dr. Tony Fiore, medical epidemiologist and captain with the U.S. Public Health Services, who is with CDC's National Center for Infectious and Respiratory Diseases. Dr. Fiore is a vaccination and immunization expert. Dr. Fiore, what did the panel decide with respect to influenza immunization for children?

[Dr. Fiore] The panel decided to expand the recommendation for annual influenza vaccination to all children 6 months through age 18 years. Previously, the recommendation had been for all children age 6 months through 59 months of age.

[Karen Hunter] So when does the recommendation take effect?

[Dr. Fiore] The recommendation will take effect with this upcoming 2008-2009 influenza season.

[Karen Hunter] Now, why is it also being recommended that it be implemented no later than the 2009-2010 season?

[Dr. Fiore] The advisory panel recognized that implementing this recommendation, which will affect as many as 30 million more children, is challenging, and they wanted to allow time to plan for the vaccination of this large group.

[Karen Hunter] Dr. Fiore, why should parents vaccinate their children against the flu?

[Dr. Fiore] Well, the flu has serious effects in some children and affects many other children with less serious illness. But that less serious illness still causes them to miss school, causes parents to miss work, and it allows transmission to other persons who might be more vulnerable to complications of influenza.

[Karen Hunter] Should parents of children in this age group get their children vaccinated now? Is it too late for the 2007-2008 flu season?

[Dr. Fiore] We believe it's not too late to get vaccinated now. Especially this year when we have had a fairly late influenza season, which we are certainly still in the thick of.

[Karen Hunter] Are certain children at higher risk of getting the flu, or having severe complications?

[Dr. Fiore] Yes. Children are at higher risk of having severe complications if they have certain chronic medical conditions, such as asthma or diabetes. In addition, children younger than five years old, and particularly those younger than two years old, continue to be a high priority because they have a similar high risk for severe complications.

[Karen Hunter] What should parents do if they can't afford this additional vaccine?

[Dr. Fiore] The ACIP vote means that the vaccine will be available through the Vaccines for Children Program, and their provider is likely already enrolled in this program.

[Karen Hunter] The expanded recommendation will mean that many more children will get the vaccine. Are there any concerns there won't be enough vaccine to go around?

[Dr. Fiore] Well, in this past season, influenza vaccine manufacturers produced at least 130 million doses of influenza vaccine and they have told us that they could potentially produce that much again. Everyone who wants to get a shot for themselves or their children should be able to get one.

[Karen Hunter] Thank you very much Dr Fiore.

[Dr. Fiore] You're welcome.

[Karen Hunter] For more information about this topic, visit, www.cdc.gov, and search on "ACIP."

[Announcer] To access the most accurate and relevant health information that affects you, your family and your community, please visit www.cdc.gov.