



A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

Get Your Flu Shot

National Influenza Vaccination Week — December 4–10, 2011

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[Announcer] This program is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

[Dr. Gaynes] Welcome to *A Cup of Health with CDC*, a weekly feature of the *MMWR*, the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. I'm your host, Dr. Robert Gaynes.

Flu season is here and it's time for most of us to get vaccinated. Each year, hundreds of thousands of people in the US get influenza and several thousand die from the disease.

Dr. Erin Kennedy is a researcher with CDC's National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases. She's joining us today to discuss the importance of getting an annual flu vaccine. Welcome to the show, Erin.

[Dr. Kennedy] Thank you, Bob

[Dr. Gaynes] Erin, who should get a flu vaccine?

[Dr. Kennedy] Well, anyone can get very sick from the flu so we recommend that everyone six months of age and older get a vaccination each year. People nine years of age and older only need one dose this season, but children six months through eight years may need two doses. Parents of children in this group should contact their health care provider to find out if they need a second dose.

[Dr. Gaynes] Erin, you mentioned that anyone can get very sick from the flu. What groups are at higher risk for getting complications from the flu?

[Dr. Kennedy] It's especially important for those at high risk of serious complications from the flu, and their close contacts, to be vaccinated. Those at higher risk for serious complications include young children; pregnant women; people with chronic health conditions, such as asthma, diabetes, and heart disease; and the elderly (over 65 years). Close contacts include health care providers and parents and caregivers of children younger than six months of age.

[Dr. Gaynes] Do we need to get a flu vaccine every year?

[Dr. Kennedy] Yes. You should get a flu vaccination each year. Flu viruses are constantly changing and the vaccine may be updated each season. This is to protect against the viruses that are expected to be circulating in the upcoming season. Also, a person's immunity to influenza viruses declines over time. For these two reasons, annual vaccination is recommended as the best protection against the flu.

[Dr. Gaynes] Does getting the vaccine guarantee you won't get the flu?

[Dr. Kennedy] Well, the flu vaccine is the single best way to protect yourself and your family from the flu, but protection is never 100% and some people can still get the flu after being vaccinated. How well the vaccine works partly depends on the age and health of the person getting vaccinated. Also, it takes about two weeks after vaccination for your body to develop protection against the flu. There are other viruses that can cause flu-like symptoms and the vaccine cannot prevent illnesses caused by these viruses.

[Dr. Gaynes] Erin, is it ever “too late” in the flu season to get vaccinated?

[Dr. Kennedy] No, it’s never too late to get vaccinated during a flu season. The flu season typically runs from October through April and flu activity usually peaks in January or February in the United States. We recommend that people get vaccinated as soon as the vaccine is available, and getting vaccinated before flu arrives in your community is best. However, it’s never too late to get vaccinated and the vaccine can still protect you against the flu, as long as flu viruses are circulating

[Dr. Gaynes] Where can listeners get more information about the flu vaccine?

[Dr. Kennedy] Listeners can get more information about influenza and the influenza vaccine at www.cdc.gov/flu.

[Dr. Gaynes] Thanks, Erin. I’ve been talking today with CDC’s Dr. Erin Kennedy about the importance of getting the flu vaccine.

Remember, the flu vaccine is recommended for everyone six months of age and older. Give yourself and your loved ones the gift of health this year. Put ‘getting a flu vaccine’ on your to-do list.

Until next time, be well. This is Dr. Robert Gaynes for *A Cup of Health with CDC*.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.