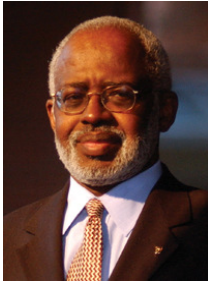


Making Flu Prevention a Priority for Good Family Health



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The start of the New Year is an excellent time to make a renewed commitment to doing all we can to keep our families in good health. As part of a nationwide health effort, President Obama has joined in the fight against influenza to stress the importance of flu prevention and the safety of the vaccine. Vaccination is the best way to reduce your family's chances of contracting influenza, or "the flu."

Some people ask if getting vaccinated can cause the flu but this is a common misconception. It is not possible to get the flu this way. As President of the National Foundation for Infectious Diseases, I want to let you know that one of the safest and most effective ways you can help protect from getting sick is by making sure that everyone is vaccinated.

Many believe that once we get through the winter holidays and into January our risk of getting the flu is behind us. One thing we know for sure about influenza is that it is unpredictable and that it can continue for several more weeks to come. In fact flu season typically lasts until May and can peak during this time of year, as we get back to school and work. And because the viruses that cause influenza change regularly, vaccination is necessary every year.

This flu season in particular has been very unpredictable as we hear about not one but *two* viruses that can threaten our health—seasonal influenza and H1N1. Influenza is a serious disease that can result in lost time at work and school, unnecessary illness, and in some cases, death. Influenza-related deaths occur in both healthy people and those with compromised immune systems or underlying medical conditions such as asthma, diabetes and heart disease. These risks exist for individuals who contract the flu and for anyone—young or old—who comes into contact with them, because it is highly contagious.

Let's do all we can this year to protect our families. If you or anyone in your family hasn't been vaccinated, talk to your doctor or other health care professional. Whether you are a teacher, parent, guardian, or caregiver, whether you lead a congregation or are part of one, I hope you will keep these thoughts and the following "5 Reasons" in mind when communicating to those who look to you for wisdom and guidance about how we can achieve this most important goal—good health.

5 Key Reasons to Get Vaccinated

1. Influenza is more serious than you think.

Influenza kills more Americans than all other vaccine-preventable diseases combined (an average of 36,000 deaths annually) and hospitalizes more than 200,000 of us each year. The best way to prevent the flu is through vaccination, good hygiene and frequent hand washing, and if you get the flu, antiviral drugs can help it.

2. Anyone, even healthy people can get the flu-- don't put your family's health at risk.

Influenza-related deaths occur in both healthy people and those with compromised immune systems or underlying medical conditions such as asthma, diabetes and heart disease.

3. Immunizing the family helps protect vulnerable infants and the older people in our lives too.

Children less than 6 months of age are too young to be vaccinated against influenza, but they are at the greatest risk of hospitalization for it. Likewise, people 50 and over have an increased risk because they are more likely to have chronic illnesses such as diabetes or heart disease that place them at greater risk of serious flu-related complications. When all members of the family are vaccinated, everyone has a better chance of staying healthy.

4. Vaccines won't cause the diseases they are designed to prevent.

People cannot "catch" the disease from the vaccine. Some vaccines contain "killed" virus, and it is impossible to get the disease from them. Others have live, but weakened, viruses designed to ensure that no one catches the disease.

5. The influenza vaccine is safe and effective.

Influenza vaccine is safe, time tested and made in the same way every year. Of course, as with all medications, vaccines can be associated with some mild, short-term side effects. Immunization is the best way to prevent influenza. The influenza vaccine can reduce chances of getting the flu by 70 to 90 percent and, if someone gets vaccinated but still gets the flu, chances are they will get a less severe case.

For more reasons and information about how vaccination protects your family, go to:

www.flu.gov

www.preventchildhoodinfluenza.org

www.adolescentvaccination.org

www.adultvaccination.org

www.NFID.org

