



Press Release

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CDC Advisory Committee Recommends Nasal Spray Flu Vaccine for Children Ages Two to Five

A panel of immunization experts has voted to expand the recommendation for the nasal spray influenza vaccine, FluMist (MedImmune Vaccines, Inc., Gaithersburg, Md.), to include healthy children from 2 to 5 years of age who are healthy and don't have a history of asthma or wheezing.

The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), the committee that advises the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on vaccine issues, voted on the new recommendation during its October 24 – 25, 2007 meeting in Atlanta

The vaccine, which contains a weakened form of the live virus and is sprayed in the nose, had previously been limited to healthy children 5 years of age and older and healthy adults up to age 50.

Every year in the United States, 5 percent to 20 percent of the population develops influenza, more than 200,000 people are hospitalized, and about 36,000 people die from influenza complications.

The CDC recommends that all children age 6 months to 59 months receive a vaccination to protect against influenza. Studies have shown that children 24 months to 5 years were more likely to see a healthcare provider for influenza than older children.

“We know that vaccinating children protects them against flu,” said Dr. Anne Schuchat, director of CDC’s National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases. “This recommendation gives parents another option when vaccinating their children.”

People younger than 2 or older than 49 years of age, or those with an underlying chronic health condition, such as heart or lung disease, diabetes or kidney disease should not receive FluMist. Those individuals should receive a flu shot rather than the nasal spray.

Previously, there were only two injectable influenza vaccines licensed in the United States for children under the age of 5. One vaccine, Fluzone (sanofi pasteur Inc., Swiftwater, Pa.), is indicated for those six months of age and older, while another vaccine, Fluvirin (Novartis Vaccines and Diagnostics Ltd, Liverpool, England) is available for use in children ages 4 and older.

Manufacturers project there will be plenty of vaccine this year; therefore, anyone who wants to reduce their chances of getting the flu should get vaccinated. However, it is especially important that certain people get vaccinated each year, because they are at high

risk of having serious flu-related complications or because they live with or care for high-risk persons.

CDC recommends that the following people get vaccinated each year:

1. People at high risk for complications from the flu, including:

- Children aged 6 months until their 5th birthday,
- Pregnant women,
- People 50 years of age and older,
- People of any age with certain chronic medical conditions, and
- People who live in nursing homes and other long term care facilities.

2. People who live with or care for those at high risk for complications from flu, including:

- Household contacts of persons at high risk for complications from the flu (see above)
- Household contacts and out of home caregivers of children less than 6 months of age (these children are too young to be vaccinated)
- Health care workers.

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