



A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

Breathe Easier

Influenza Vaccination Coverage Among Persons with Asthma — United States, 2005–06 Influenza Season

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

[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.

Millions of Americans suffer with asthma. An asthma attack is caused by the inflammation of a person's airway, making it extremely difficult to breathe. When combined with a case of influenza, or the flu, the risk for serious medical consequences is higher than normal. The nation's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices recommends that persons with asthma get a flu vaccine every year.

Colin Ligon is a researcher with CDC's National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases, and he's joining us today to discuss the potentially deadly combination of asthma and influenza. Welcome to the show, Colin.

[Dr. Ligon] Thank you for having me.

[Dr. Gaynes] Colin, how many people in the United States suffer from asthma?

[Dr. Ligon] Well, in 2006, about 23 million people in the United States had asthma.

[Dr. Gaynes] Is it more common among any particular age group?

[Dr. Ligon] It is slightly more common among children. There's about seven million children, which is a little over nine percent, in 2006, versus the 16 million adults, which is just over seven percent of adults.

[Dr. Gaynes] Are people with asthma more susceptible to getting influenza?

[Dr. Ligon] No, it's not clear that people with asthma are more likely to get influenza than anybody else.

[Dr. Gaynes] Are people with asthma more likely to have a severe case of influenza?

[Dr. Ligon] Yes, people with asthma that develop influenza are more likely to be hospitalized with it. However, whether they are more likely to die is not clear.

[Dr. Gaynes] What is it about asthma that can make a case of flu worse than usual?

[Dr. Ligon] Asthma is a disease of chronic inflammation of the small airways of the lungs. And while influenza might not trigger asthma attacks, the underlying inflammation that's already going on on top of the inflammation from influenza is thought to predispose them to worse outcomes.

[Dr. Gaynes] When does the annual flu vaccine generally become available?

[Dr. Ligon] The influenza vaccine becomes available each year in October. The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices does recommend that all persons with chronic asthma receive a flu vaccine every year.

[Dr. Gaynes] Where can listeners get more information about asthma and the influenza vaccine?

[Dr. Ligon] The Air Pollution and Respiratory Health Branch of the CDC has a website; it's www.cdc.gov/asthma. And that has information for persons with asthma and also has further links about influenza vaccination.

[Dr. Gaynes] Colin, thanks for sharing this information with our listeners today.

[Dr. Ligon] Well, thanks for so much having me.

[Dr. Gaynes] That's it for this week's show. Be sure and join us again next week. Until then, 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, 24/7.