

Appendices

Appendix A: CDC Influenza Awareness Campaign Key Messages and Talking Points

The key messages and talking points listed below were developed in support of the 2008-2009 CDC Influenza Awareness Campaign. Use these messages as written or tailor them as appropriate to make them more relevant to and supportive of your media outreach work.

General

- Each year in the U.S., an average of 36,000 people die, and more than 200,000 are hospitalized from serious flu-related complications.
- The flu is a contagious disease that can cause mild to severe illness and can lead to hospitalization and even death.
- Influenza is contagious and is thought to spread mainly when an infected person coughs or sneezes near others.
- In general, the flu is worse than the common cold, and symptoms such as fever (usually high), body aches, extreme tiredness, and dry cough are more common and intense. However, because flu symptoms can mimic the symptoms of other respiratory illnesses, it can be very difficult to know if a respiratory infection is caused by the flu virus or not. A doctor can tell you for sure.
- Complications of flu can include bacterial pneumonia, dehydration, worsening of chronic medical conditions, such as congestive heart failure, asthma, or diabetes and other complications. Children, in particular, may get sinus and ear infections.
- Influenza is unpredictable. We do not know when the flu season will begin or how severe it will be.
- Studies have shown that older people, young children, pregnant women and people with certain chronic medical conditions (such as lung and heart disease) are at increased risk of serious complications.
- Vaccination is the first and most important step in protecting yourself and your loved ones against this serious disease.
- While there are many different flu viruses, the flu vaccine protects best against the three main flu strains that research indicates will cause the most illness during the flu season.
- The vaccine can protect you from getting sick from these three viruses or it can make your illness milder if you get a different flu virus.
- Flu vaccine is safe and cannot cause the flu. This has been shown in many scientific studies.
- Because different influenza viruses circulate each year, new flu vaccines must be made to fight these viruses, which is why it is important to get a flu vaccine *every year*.
- The nasal-spray flu vaccine is an option for healthy persons aged 2-49 years who are not pregnant.

- Yearly flu vaccination should begin in September or as soon as vaccine is available and continue throughout the influenza season, into December, January, and beyond. This is because the timing and duration of influenza seasons vary. While influenza outbreaks can happen as early as October, most of the time influenza activity peaks in January or later.
- The closer the “match” between the influenza viruses in the vaccine and those spreading in the community, the more effective the vaccine is likely to be in preventing influenza.
- Influenza vaccine effectiveness (ability to prevent influenza) has been as high as 70-90% in healthy young adults, when the viruses in the vaccine were well matched to circulating flu viruses.
- Medicare Part B covers the flu shot in full.
- People who have a severe allergic reaction to chicken eggs should not get the influenza vaccine before consulting with their physician.
- It takes about 2 weeks for the body to build up immunity to the flu viruses in the vaccine after vaccination.
- Getting vaccinated early is especially important for children younger than 9 years old getting a flu vaccine for the first time. This is because those children need two doses of vaccine given 4 weeks or more apart. The first dose primes the immune system; the second dose provides immune protection. **If your child needs two doses, begin the vaccination process early.**
- To learn more about the influenza and the flu vaccine call toll-free 1-800-CDC-INFO or visit www.cdc.gov/flu

Recommended Groups

- People who should be vaccinated each year include those who are age 50 or older, pregnant women, children aged 6 months through 18 years of age, and adults and children with chronic health conditions such as asthma, diabetes, cancer, HIV/AIDS, or heart or kidney disease, and people living in nursing facilities. These persons are recommended to get vaccinated because they are at higher risk for getting the flu or having flu complications
- Other people who should get vaccinated against the flu are those who care for or live with the following persons: people age 50 or older, pregnant women, children younger than 5 years old, and adults and children with chronic health conditions such as asthma, diabetes, cancer, HIV/AIDS, or heart or kidney disease. Its especially important for family members and caregivers of infants younger than six months old to get vaccinated, because these infants are too young to receive the flu vaccine.
- In addition, health professionals should also get the flu vaccine to protect themselves and their patients.
- All healthcare professionals, as well as those in training for health care professions, should be vaccinated annually against influenza.
- Your patients are counting on you. Protect yourself. Protect your patients. Get your flu vaccine.

- In 2008-2009, there are 261.5 million persons recommended for vaccination – that is about 84.5% of the US population.

Children and the Flu

- It is estimated that an average of 20,000 children younger than 5 years old are hospitalized due to flu in the United States.
- Children should get a flu vaccine each year starting at six months through eighteen years of age.
- A second dose of flu vaccine is required for children aged six months through 8 years who are getting vaccinated for the first time. The second dose must be given 28 or more days after the first.
- This is because those children need two doses of vaccine given 4 weeks or more apart. The first dose primes the immune system; the second dose provides immune protection. If your child needs two doses, begin the vaccination process early.
- Children under 6 months of age can get very sick from the flu, but they are too young to get a vaccine. The best way to protect them is to make sure that every member of their household and all of their caregivers are vaccinated.
- CDC recommends that all children aged 6 months up to their 19th birthday get a flu vaccine. This is because vaccination is the best method for preventing flu and its potentially severe complications in children. Vaccination reduces the risk for flu in that child and also reduces the chances that the child will expose others who might be more vulnerable to influenza complications (like babies and grandparents). Vaccinating children also reduces the chances that parents will have to miss work to care for children sick with the flu.
- Children who have no insurance or whose insurance does not cover immunizations may be eligible for the Vaccines for Children Program and can receive free flu vaccine.

Racial/Ethnic Groups – Hispanics

- Hispanics 65 and older often suffer from chronic health conditions such as diabetes and heart disease, which make them more susceptible to flu-related complications that can lead to hospitalization and even death.
- Latinos aged 65 and older are among the groups hardest hit by influenza. CDC recommends a yearly flu vaccine as the first and most important step in protecting against this serious disease.

Timing/Extended Season/National Influenza Vaccination Week

- National Influenza Vaccination Week is aimed at raising awareness about the seriousness of influenza and the importance of vaccination. NIVW is December 8 to 14, 2008 this year.
- Since the flu season usually peaks in January or later, getting vaccinated in December and beyond can still provide protection against influenza.
- You can get vaccinated as soon as you hear vaccine is available. Getting vaccinated early ensures that you will be ready when influenza season arrives.
- But, if you didn't get vaccinated earlier, you can still get the vaccine.

- Make a New Year's Resolution to protect yourself and your family by getting the flu vaccine today.
- It's not too late to protect yourself and your loved ones against the flu. See your health care provider to get the flu vaccine or seek out other opportunities to get the vaccine.
- The flu vaccine clinic locator is a helpful tool to find vaccine in your area:
<http://www.flucliniclocator.org/>
- The protection you get from the flu vaccine will last for the entire flu season.

Vaccine Production, Distribution, and Anticipated Supply

- Manufacturers are predicting that there will be plenty of vaccine this year.
- At this time, manufacturers predict that they will be able to produce as many as 146 million doses of vaccine for the United States.
- Vaccine is distributed in phases as it becomes available beginning in late August and through December. Most of the vaccine is expected to be distributed by the end of November.

Updated Vaccine Messages for this year – Thimerosal and Safety

- As many as 50 million doses of thimerosal-free influenza vaccine will be (are) available this year.
- If you are concerned about thimerosal, ask for thimerosal-free influenza vaccine.
- Several large studies have found no link between children who got vaccines with thimerosal and autism.
- Vaccines are carefully monitored for any sign of safety concerns by scientists and physicians.

Vaccine Mismatch Concerns

- There are many different influenza viruses and they are changing constantly so every year there are new strains of flu.
- The likelihood that influenza vaccine will protect a person depends on at least two things: 1) characteristics of the person being vaccinated (such as their age and health) and 2) the similarity or "match" between the influenza viruses in the vaccine and those spreading in the community.
- The closer the "match" between the influenza viruses in the vaccine and those spreading in the community, the more effective the vaccine is likely to be in preventing influenza.
- We cannot know for certain what virus strains will predominate over the season because flu viruses are constantly changing.
- Influenza vaccine production begins as early as 9 months before vaccine becomes available. Each production cycle begins by selecting the strains that are the best match to the flu strains anticipated to be circulating during the upcoming flu season.
- Because of this long lead time and the fact that flu viruses are constantly changing, there is always a risk that circulating flu viruses may be different than those in the vaccine.
- All three of the virus strains have been changed from last year's vaccine.
- The vaccine contains: an A/Brisbane/59/2007 (H1N1)-like virus; an A/Brisbane/10/2007 (H3N2)-like virus; a B/Florida/4/2006-like virus.

- These are three main flu strains that research indicates will cause the most illness during the upcoming flu season.
- These viruses were chosen for the vaccine in February 2008 based on surveillance data, laboratory information, and availability of reference vaccine strains.
- The vaccine can protect you from getting sick from these three viruses or it can make your illness milder if you get a different flu virus.
- While selecting which influenza viruses are likely to circulate in the upcoming season is a challenging task, there is a good track record.
- In 16 of the last 20 seasons, the viruses in the influenza vaccine have been well matched to circulating viruses.
- We are optimistic that this year's vaccine will be on target in protecting against the flu.