

American Medical Association

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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REMINDER TO AMERICA'S PATIENTS AND PHYSICIANS: *Influenza shot provides protection against potentially serious illness*

CHICAGO—Millions of people at serious risk for influenza-related complications have not yet been vaccinated, according to the American Medical Association and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. To ensure patients and physicians get the message—and their influenza shot—the AMA, CDC, American Academy of Family Physicians, American Academy of Pediatrics, American College of Physicians-American Society of Internal Medicine, and the American College of Preventive Medicine have declared the first two weeks of December the “National Influenza Vaccination Catch-Up” fortnight.

Influenza (sometimes referred to as “the flu”) is a serious disease resulting in an average of 110,000 hospitalizations and 20,000 deaths annually. It also leads to millions of doctor visits and results in many missed days at work.

The organizations said the best defense against getting influenza is getting vaccinated now. There is plenty of influenza vaccine available this season, so those still needing vaccine should receive it now. In general, influenza seasons do not peak until January or later, which gives patients who get vaccinated now enough time to be properly protected. For some people, getting immunized could be a life-saving decision.

The organizations specifically are encouraging all physicians to check their records to see which of their high-risk patients need influenza vaccine, but have not yet been vaccinated for the coming season. Elderly patients and those with medical conditions, such as diabetes, or heart or lung diseases including asthma, are considered high risk and should schedule their influenza shot as soon as possible. Health care workers and people who live with high-risk persons also are encouraged to receive the influenza vaccine so that they don't pass influenza to those at high risk.

Even those people who aren't in high-risk categories face a variety of problems, ranging from high fever and lingering fatigue to lost days at work, and missing holiday events. To avoid getting influenza, these people should also consider getting the vaccine.

Patients and physicians with any questions about the influenza vaccine can call the National Immunization Program toll-free hotline: 800-232-2522 (English) 800-232-0233 (Spanish).

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