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Are You One of the 260 Million Americans Who Needs Flu Vaccine?***National Influenza Vaccination Week is December 8-14***

Philadelphia, November 25, 2008 – It's flu season once again. Every year, flu infects up to 20 percent of the population, causes the hospitalization of about 200,000 people, and kills 36,000. But with plenty of flu vaccine available this year, it doesn't have to be that way.

"National Influenza Vaccination Week provides a valuable opportunity to remind physicians to vaccinate themselves, their patients, their staff members, and other health care workers," said Vincenza Snow, MD, FACP, director of clinical programs and quality of care at the American College of Physicians (ACP). "Patients need to hear from their physicians that getting vaccinated is the single best way to protect not only themselves against flu, but their loved ones as well."

Dr. Snow also stressed the importance for health care workers to walk the walk and follow the [flu vaccination policy recommendations from the ACP](#), among others.

"By getting vaccinated, health professionals can prevent a significant number of flu infections, hospitalizations, and deaths among their patients," she said. "It also influences patients to get immunized if they know that their own doctor is vaccinated."

Flu viruses change often. Therefore, flu vaccine is updated each year to make sure it is as effective as possible.

Because flu viruses circulate well into the spring and summer, Dr. Snow recommends that clinicians follow the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommendation that

vaccination continue through March. Flu vaccine can be given at the same time as other immunizations, including pneumococcal vaccine.

If they haven't already, adults should contact their internist to get an annual flu vaccination.

ACP recommends flu vaccine for:

- Adults 50 or older.
- Residents of long term care facilities housing persons with chronic medical conditions.
- Anyone who has a serious long-term health problem with heart disease; lung disease; asthma; kidney disease; diabetes; or anemia and other blood disorders.
- Anyone whose immune system is weakened because of HIV/AIDS or other diseases that affect the immune system; long-term treatment with drugs such as steroids; or cancer treatment with x-rays or drugs.
- Women who will be past the third month of pregnancy during flu season.
- Physicians, nurses, health care workers.
- Family members and anyone else coming in close contact with people at risk of flu.
- Children between ages 6 months and 18 years, unless they have a serious egg allergy.

The [American College of Physicians](#) is the largest medical specialty organization and the second-largest physician group in the United States. ACP members include 126,000 internal medicine physicians (internists), related subspecialists, and medical students. Internists specialize in the prevention, detection, and treatment of illness in adults.

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