

Monday, October 27, 2008

UP TO 1.2 MILLION HOOSIERS COULD FALL PREY TO FLU THIS SEASON

Health experts recommend an annual influenza vaccination for nearly 250 million people in the U.S. Despite this recommendation, influenza immunization rates fall short every year. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimate that on average 5% to 20% of the population will suffer from influenza this year. In Indiana, that means 306,736 to 1,226,946 Hoosiers will be affected based on Census Bureau data reporting the state's population at 6,134,731 persons.

According to Indiana Adult Immunization Coalition (IAIC) Chair Dr. Roland Grieb, "Despite serious health risks associated with influenza, many people, including children 6 months through 18 years of age, those 50 years of age and older and people with chronic health problems are not getting immunized. More than 4 out of 5 Americans should be vaccinated every year, which means it's likely each one of us knows someone whose well-being, good health or life depends on getting an influenza immunization each and every year."

Influenza, along with its complications, is a serious respiratory illness. On average, about 36,000 Americans die and about 226,000 people are hospitalized in the U.S. every year. Vaccination is a safe and effective way to prevent influenza and its complications.

Complications from influenza can include bacterial pneumonia, ear infections, sinus infections, dehydration, and worsening of chronic medical conditions such as congestive heart failure, asthma or diabetes.

"In addition it is recommended that pregnant women, and anyone with a chronic health condition such as asthma, COPD, heart disease or diabetes receive an annual influenza immunization," Grieb said.

Vaccination typically begins in October and can continue through March. In most seasons, influenza virus peaks in February or March, so vaccination throughout the entire flu season is beneficial and recommended.

Where to Get a Flu Shot

The American Lung Association offers a Flu Clinic Locator at www.flucliniclocator.org, which is the largest online directory of public influenza clinics.

The Indiana Adult Immunization Coalition is a voluntary group of health and older adult focused organizations dedicated to eradicating vaccine preventable deaths and disease among adults. The Coalition promotes education and outreach activities to increase awareness of and participation in adult immunizations.