

December 22, 2008

WINTER SOLSTICE MARKS BEGINNING OF FLU SEASON Group Recommends Flu Shot to Prevent Getting It

The Indiana Adult Immunization Coalition wants Hoosiers to know what the symptoms of the flu are but more importantly, that they can protect themselves from the disease.

With the official start of winter today, Dr. Roland Grieb, Chair of the IAIC, says the best way to reduce the effects of influenza is through annual vaccination. "Influenza vaccines are safe and effective. Although mild side effects are possible, a person cannot get influenza from the vaccine."

According to a recent Rand Corp. survey of 4,000 U.S. adults, 30% had received a flu shot, 17% were planning to get one, and 53% said they would not get one. The Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) reported that between September 28-November 29, 2008, influenza activity remained low in the United States.

Influenza is not the common cold. It's a potentially life-threatening disease that sends over 226,000 people in the U.S. to the hospital each year. Another 36,000 die each year from complications of the disease. This year, 306,736 to 1,226,946 Hoosiers will be susceptible to the flu.

The CDC says 85% of Americans should be immunized before the peak flu season begins next month. There are up to 30 million or more U.S. cases of flu after the new year annually.

Grieb said, "Influenza symptoms include fever, body aches and pains, chills, sore throat, dry cough, loss of appetite, weakness, and tiredness. The virus is spread mainly from person to person through coughing, sneezing or other hand-to-hand contact. It is possible to become infected by touching an object with the virus on it and then touching your mouth or nose."

Most people can infect others beginning 1 day before symptoms develop and for up to 5 days after becoming sick. That means that you may be able to pass on influenza to someone else before you know you are sick, as well as while you are sick.

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.

December 29, 2008

TO YOUR HEALTH: A NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION

If you are over the age of 19, the Indiana Adult Immunization Coalition has a few recommendations on how to protect your health in 2009 and beyond.

According to Roland Grieb, M.D., Chair of the Coalition, vaccines are not just for infants and children. "At any age, immunization provides the longest-lasting, most effective protection against disease. If you have questions about what is appropriate for you, ask your doctor to keep you up to date with your recommended vaccines. If you don't have a doctor, visit your local public health office."

Among the vaccines recommended for adults over the age of 19 are:

- An annual flu vaccine;
- Pneumococcal if you have certain chronic medical conditions;
- Tetanus, diphtheria, pertussis, one booster every 10 years;
- Hepatitis A or B is recommended for people with medical, occupational or lifestyle risks;
- Measles, mumps and rubella is recommended for those born in 1957 or later;
- Varicella is recommended for adults who have NOT had chickenpox;
- Meningococcal is recommended for young adults living in dormitories; and
- Zoster is recommended for all adults age 60 and over.

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December 15, 2008

Protect Yourself from Hepatitis – It's Easy with a Vaccine

Hepatitis means inflammation of the liver. Toxins, certain drugs, some diseases, heavy alcohol use, and bacterial and viral infections can all cause hepatitis. Hepatitis is also the name of a family of viral infections that affect the liver; the most common types in the United States are hepatitis A, hepatitis B, and hepatitis C.

What is the difference between hepatitis A and hepatitis B?

The diseases are caused by two different viruses. Although each can cause similar symptoms, they have different modes of transmission and can affect the liver differently. Hepatitis A occurs only as an acute or newly occurring infection and does not become chronic. People with hepatitis A usually improve without treatment. Hepatitis B can also begin as an acute infection, but in some people, the virus remains in the body, resulting in chronic disease and long term liver problems. There are vaccines to prevent both A and B. If a person has had one type of viral hepatitis in the past, it is still possible to get the other types.

Hepatitis A is caused by the hepatitis A virus (HAV) and lasts from a few weeks to several months. It does not lead to chronic infection. It is usually spread when a person ingests fecal matter – even in microscopic amounts – from contact with objects, food or drinks contaminated by the feces of an infected person. The best to prevent hepatitis A is by getting vaccinated. For more information, visit www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/A/aFAQ.htm#overview.

Hepatitis B is a liver disease caused by the hepatitis B virus (HBV). It ranges in severity from a mild illness, lasting a few weeks to a serious long-term chronic illness that can lead to liver disease or liver cancer. Contact with infectious blood, semen and other bodily fluids from an infected person or sharing contaminated needles to inject drugs are the common methods of transmission. The best way to prevent hepatitis B is a vaccination. For more information about hepatitis B, visit <http://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/B/bFAQ.htm>.

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