



PREVENTION OPPORTUNITIES UNDER THE BIG SKY

PREVENTION AND CONTROL OF INFLUENZA

Influenza is a highly infectious respiratory disease which causes substantial hospitalization and death every year. It is preventable. The single best way to protect yourself and others from influenza is to get vaccinated. Cases can also be prevented by disease control steps that are well characterized as common sense measures. This issue of *Montana Public Health* will provide information about this year's vaccine, persons who should be vaccinated and disease control steps that must be applied to maximize prevention of this serious disease.

THE VACCINE: RECORD NUMBER OF DOSES AVAILABLE THIS YEAR

- the 2006-2007 vaccine contains 3 strains of influenza virus; the H3N2 and B strains are new in this year's vaccine while the H1N1 strain was also in last year's vaccine
- two types of vaccine are available: trivalent (inactivated) influenza vaccine (TIV) and live, attenuated influenza vaccine (LAIV)
- TIV, which is injected, should be given to persons in high risk groups and to contacts of severely immunized persons; LAIV, which is inhaled, should be offered to healthy persons aged 5-49 years
- Influenza vaccine can be given now and throughout the influenza season

WHO SHOULD GET THE VACCINE?

- persons at risk of influenza-related complications [see Recommendation on page 2]
- physicians, nurses and persons who work in hospital, outpatient and emergency service settings
- employees and visitors in nursing homes and assisted living settings
- household contacts and caretakers of children aged 0 to 6 years.

Is Influenza a serious disease? The average number of deaths each year since 1990:

- in U.S.more than 36,000
- in Montanamore than 200

Are high risk persons being vaccinated? The vaccination rate among persons aged 65 or older in 2005:

- (Influenza vaccine)
- in U.S.66%
 - in Montana70%
- (Pneumococcal vaccine)
- in U.S.66%
 - in Montana.....70%

Prevention opportunity

- at least 90% of persons aged 65 or more should be vaccinated with both influenza and pneumococcal vaccine

INFLUENZA ANTIVIRAL MEDICATIONS

- due to widespread resistance amantadine and rimantadine should NOT be used this year for treatment or prophylaxis
- two neuraminidase inhibitors are currently approved for treatment and chemoprophylaxis for influenza A and influenza B infections for the following age groups:

	Treatment	Prophylaxis
Oseltamivir	≥ 1 year	≥ 1 year
Zanamivir	≥ 7 years	≥ 5 years

DISEASE CONTROL – Stop the spread of influenza and other infections!

- Wash your hands often; use soap and water or an alcohol based solution
- If you cough or sneeze, cover your nose and mouth with a tissue or the inside of your elbow
- Dispose of the tissue in a waste receptacle and wash your hands
- Avoid touching your nose, eyes, or mouth
- Wash your hands after being out in the community to shop or attend meetings
- Stay home when you are sick with a fever and cough

DISEASE CONTROL – Decrease the chance of serious complications of influenza

- Pneumococcal disease (caused by a bacterial infection) frequently complicates influenza in high risk persons; these persons should be protected by pneumococcal vaccine as well as influenza vaccine [see Recommendation below]
- Persons with chronic diseases such as diabetes, chronic lung diseases, heart disease or immunodeficiency disease should adhere strictly to treatment regimens established by their physician
- Do not smoke or use tobacco products

RECOMMENDATION: Persons who should be vaccinated with influenza and pneumococcal vaccine

All persons 50 and older should get influenza vaccine every year

Influenza vaccine is also recommended for:

- children aged 6 to 59 months
- all persons 6 months and older with chronic medical conditions such as health disease, pulmonary disease (including asthma), diabetes, kidney disease and immune system disease
- persons aged 6 months to 18 years on long-term aspirin treatment
- pregnant women
- residents of nursing homes and other chronic care settings
- close contacts of persons in the above groups
- all health care workers and employees in nursing homes

All persons 65 and older should get the pneumococcal vaccine one time

A single revaccination is recommended after 5 years for:

- all persons with immune system disease
- persons vaccinated before age 65 who are currently over age 65

Complete recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices is available at <http://www.dphhs.mt.gov/influenza/>, or call Immunization Section at (406) 444-5580

NOTE: The November issue of *Montana Public Health* will describe use of the Montana Tobacco Quit Line.



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