



CHILDHOOD INFLUENZA IMMUNIZATION COALITION SUPPORTS SECOND ANNUAL CHILDREN'S FLU VACCINATION DAY

The National Foundation for Infectious Diseases' (NFID) *Childhood Influenza Immunization Coalition* (CIIC) is pleased to support the second annual Children's Flu Vaccination Day (Tuesday, December 9), a part of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) National Influenza Vaccination Week. The *Coalition* applauds CDC and Families Fighting Flu, Inc. (FFF) for establishing this day, which emphasizes the need to vaccinate children and their contacts against influenza throughout December and into the New Year.

Influenza claims the lives of nearly 100 children every year in the United States, and puts about 20,000 in the hospital. Anyone can get influenza, but rates of infection are highest among children. The virus often spreads rapidly in schools, due in large part to the students' close proximity throughout the day, and their sub-optimal hygiene habits. While people younger than 5 years of age are most vulnerable to complications from influenza, influenza's impact on older children is also substantial, resulting in school absenteeism, costly medical visits and lost workdays for parents.

"The importance of vaccinating children and their contacts against influenza cannot be overstated," said Dr. Carol J. Baker, Professor of Pediatrics, Molecular Virology and Microbiology, Baylor College of Medicine and Moderator, NFID's *Childhood Influenza Immunization Coalition*. "What's most troubling about the grim statistics on childhood influenza is that the disease is preventable through vaccination."

The CDC and American Academy of Pediatrics recommend that all children 6 months through 18 years of age receive the influenza vaccine every year. This expanded recommendation increases the number of children prioritized for vaccination this year by roughly 30 million. One way to reach and vaccinate more children is to continue to give vaccine later into the influenza season. But CDC survey data show that very few Americans seek vaccination during the winter months, with a considerable drop in vaccination rates taking place every year around Thanksgiving.

"This day is meant to remind parents that influenza vaccine is still available, should be given, and continues to be beneficial when given in the winter months," Dr. Baker said. "If you and your children have not yet been vaccinated against influenza, I strongly urge you to do so. Vaccination keeps kids in school and parents at work. It also saves lives and prevents hospitalizations."

About the *Childhood Influenza Immunization Coalition*

NFID's *Childhood Influenza Immunization Coalition* was established to protect infants, children and adolescents from influenza by communicating with "one strong voice" the need to make influenza immunization a national health priority. *Coalition* members represent 30 of the nation's leading public health, medical, patient and parent groups committed to protecting children's health and encouraging wellness.

The *Coalition* has an array of informational resources available on its Web site, www.PreventChildhoodInfluenza.org. The site features a 2+ minute informational video on influenza, www.preventchildhoodinfluenza.org/ciicvideo, and videos of *Coalition* members answering frequently asked questions. Broadcast-quality b-roll is available for download at <http://www.prnewswire.com/mnr/ciic/34896/>.

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