All healthcare personnel need seasonal and H1N1 influenza vaccination

Dear Readers,

In August, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) published recommendations for the use of H1N1 influenza vaccine (www.cdc.gov/mmwr/PDF/rr/rr5810.pdf). In the recommendations, CDC identified healthcare workers as a high-priority group for immunization with H1N1 influenza vaccine. CDC did this for two reasons. Healthcare workers must be protected from the virus so they will be well enough to come to work and care for sick patients. Even more important, patients must not be placed at risk of getting H1N1 influenza from their caregivers.

As I discussed in the July 2009 issue of *Vaccinate Adults,* the rate of healthcare worker influenza immunization has long been extremely low. This year more than ever before, it is important that every healthcare worker understand that influenza is a deadly disease and the vaccines that prevent it are safe.

Let's make this the season that healthcare professionals show their commitment to patient safety by getting vaccinated in record numbers against seasonal and H1N1 influenza.

Just as some healthcare workers and some patients may have inaccurate ideas about the seasonal influenza vaccine, some may have incorrect beliefs about this year's H1N1 vaccine. The box at the right will help you educate your coworkers and staff on the facts about H1N1 influenza vaccine. We encourage you to copy this letter and the facts at the right and distribute them widely.

Let's make this the season that healthcare professionals show their commitment to patient safety by getting vaccinated in record numbers against seasonal and H1N1 influenza. Make sure you are fully immunized yourself, and tell your coworkers and patients that no matter how serious the upcoming influenza season may be, you've done what you can to protect them from it. Your example may be all it takes for them to act—and to get vaccinated themselves.

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Key Facts About H1N1 Influenza Vaccine

1. ***Seasonal influenza vaccine won't protect against H1N1 influenza.***
   Every healthcare worker should be vaccinated against both H1N1 and seasonal influenza.

2. ***All healthcare personnel need 2009 H1N1 influenza vaccine, including those 65 and older.***
   The vaccine is recommended for every healthcare worker, regardless of age. Though preliminary data (which are all we have now) seem to show that older people are likely to have some immunity, don't assume this vaccine isn't necessary if you're a healthcare worker who is 65 or older.

3. ***H1N1 influenza is a dangerous virus.***
   It is easily passed from person to person, and it can cause serious complications among healthy people.

4. ***The vaccine against H1N1 is not experimental.***
   H1N1 influenza vaccine has been developed using the same safe methods that produce each year's seasonal influenza vaccine. There is every reason to expect that the H1N1 influenza vaccine will be as safe as seasonal influenza vaccine is.

5. ***Antiviral medicine is no substitute for vaccination.***
   If you are infected with influenza, you can pass it to others, including vulnerable patients, for 24 to 48 hours before you have any symptoms. And, though antiviral medicines are valuable for treating people with H1N1 influenza, the best way for you to protect your patients is by getting vaccinated.

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