



August 6, 2010

Dear Provider,

As last year proved beyond a doubt, influenza can be unpredictable. Consequences of the 2009 H1N1 pandemic factored into CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices' (ACIP) vote earlier this year to recommend universal influenza vaccination for all persons 6 months of age and older.

How does this affect you? Because **all** people age 6 months and older are now recommended to receive annual influenza vaccination, offering flu vaccine at any opportunity, for every patient is essential. Vaccination efforts should begin as soon as vaccine is available and continue throughout the influenza season. This year's vaccine will include the 2009 H1N1 strain as part of the regular seasonal vaccine. Communication science research conducted this summer has shown us that consumers may have safety concerns about the 2009 H1N1 strain being included in the vaccine, which can be a barrier to seeking vaccination. We rely on you to continue to emphasize that this year's flu vaccine is made in the same way as past flu vaccines. An average of 100 million doses of influenza vaccine have been used in the United States each year, and flu vaccines have an excellent safety record.

While everyone is now recommended to receive influenza vaccine, your high-risk patients—pregnant women, those with asthma, diabetes, or other chronic conditions—remain at risk for serious complications from influenza. CDC, and state and local public health agencies, will continue to reinforce efforts to emphasize the crucial importance of vaccine for these groups while simultaneously promoting annual influenza vaccination for everyone in the community. Realistically, your practice may be limited in the amount of vaccine doses you can provide, but you can still play a critical role in encouraging influenza vaccination for your patients and their families. You can urge your own patients to make sure they vaccinate themselves and their family members too, perhaps utilizing options that might be available through pharmacies, schools, workplaces, or other local partners. *Studies show that your recommendation makes the difference in convincing patients to seek influenza vaccination.*

Free resources such as patient education handouts, posters for your office, copies of the vaccine information statement (VIS), and updated information for you and your staff are available at www.cdc.gov/flu and www.flu.gov. For those of you who have been long-time champions of flu vaccine, we truly appreciate your efforts and hope that this new 'universal' recommendation makes your job that much easier. For those of you recently joining the fight to prevent the spread of influenza in your community, we hope that you will begin the practice of "*any opportunity, for every patient.*" Don't forget to vaccinate yourself and your staff so you can tell patients, "I got vaccinated. You should too." Vaccination continues to be the best protection against influenza, and your efforts will be reflected in a healthier community—**yours**.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Anne Schuchat".

Anne Schuchat, MD
Rear Admiral, US Public Health Service
Assistant Surgeon General
Director, National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases