



Childhood Influenza
Immunization Coalition
The Power of One Strong Voice



National
Foundation for
Infectious
Diseases

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**CONTACT: JENNIFER CORRIGAN
732-382-8898 (OFFICE)
732-742-7148 (CELL)**

***CHILDHOOD INFLUENZA IMMUNIZATION COALITION ENCOURAGES VACCINATION
THROUGHOUT THE INFLUENZA SEASON***

***Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Families Fighting Flu
Declare November 27 National Children's Flu Vaccination Day***

Bethesda, Maryland, November 27, 2007 — To raise awareness of the need to vaccinate more infants, children and adolescents against influenza, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), in conjunction with Families Fighting Flu, declared today, November 27, as the first ever “Children’s Flu Vaccination Day.” The National Foundation for Infectious Diseases’ (NFID) *Childhood Influenza Immunization Coalition* commends this effort to emphasize the importance of annual influenza vaccination to protect children and their contacts from this serious and potentially deadly virus.

“Influenza claims more American lives every year than all other vaccine-preventable diseases combined,” said Richard H. Carmona, M.D., M.P.H., FACS, *Coalition* Chair, 17th Surgeon General of the United States (2002-2006), President of Canyon Ranch Institute and Distinguished Professor of Public Health, The University of Arizona Mel and Enid Zuckerman College of Public Health. “Annual influenza vaccination is safe and protects our children from disease. But many children still do not receive the influenza vaccine as they should each year. The CDC and Families Fighting Flu, members of the *Childhood Influenza Immunization Coalition*, are doing their part to prevent influenza from harming our children. I want to thank them for the important work they do throughout the year, and especially today on Children’s Flu Vaccination Day, to educate all Americans about the critical need for children to be vaccinated against influenza.”

Children’s Flu Vaccination Day falls within this year’s National Influenza Vaccination Week (NIVW), from November 26 through December 2. NIVW is an annual CDC event designed to highlight the

importance of continuing influenza vaccination through November, December and beyond. In the United States, the influenza season may begin as early as October and end as late as May.

New survey data released by the CDC demonstrate that very few people seek influenza vaccination after November. According to a National Health Interview Survey, for the past two influenza seasons approximately 84 percent of all influenza vaccinations were administered during September through November, with a strong peak in early October and a drastic drop by early December. Because many people recommended for vaccination remain unvaccinated at the end of November, the CDC is encouraging public health partners and health care professionals to conduct vaccination clinics and other activities that promote the effectiveness of influenza vaccination during NIVW.

“There is a misconception among parents and others that influenza vaccination can only take place during a narrow period of time each fall. This misconception must be dispelled,” said *Coalition* Moderator, Carol J. Baker, M.D., FAAP, FIDSA, President of NFID and Professor of Pediatrics, Molecular Virology and Microbiology, Baylor College of Medicine. “Because influenza can continue to circulate as late as May, we need to continue providing influenza vaccination to patients who haven’t received it throughout the fall and winter.”

Denise Palmer of Families Fighting Flu, who lost her 15-month-old daughter to influenza in 2003, and Dan Jernigan, M.D., M.P.H., Deputy Director of the Influenza Division of the National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases at the CDC, are participating in communications activities on Children’s Flu Vaccination Day to encourage parents and health care professionals to seek and give influenza vaccinations throughout the fall and winter.

CDC and Families Fighting Flu are member organizations of the *Childhood Influenza Immunization Coalition*, a coalition made up of 25 of the nation’s leading public health, medical, patient and parent groups dedicated to protecting infants, children and adolescents from influenza by communicating with "one strong voice" the need to make influenza immunization a national health priority.

-more-

Influenza: Serious but Preventable

Each year, influenza causes approximately 20,000 hospitalizations and nearly 100 deaths in children younger than 5 years of age. Only 20.6 percent of children 6 to 23 months of age were fully immunized for influenza during the 2005-2006 season, even though the CDC recommends that all of these children be vaccinated.

In addition to protecting children from influenza and its serious complications, annual vaccination also protects communities and high risk individuals, such as those with asthma and diabetes, since the influenza virus spreads easily from children to others. Young children may be contagious for longer periods than adults and, like adults, can spread the virus for at least one day before their symptoms occur. Children may also be less likely to wash their hands frequently and “cover their coughs.”

About Current Influenza Vaccination Recommendations

To protect children from influenza, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends annual vaccination of all children 6 months up to 5 years of age. Vaccination is also recommended for any child at least 6 months of age with a compromised immune system and certain underlying medical conditions (e.g., asthma, diabetes, heart disease, immune deficiency). In addition, vaccination is recommended for close contacts of any of these children, and for anyone who lives with or cares for infants 0 to 6 months of age since this is the only way to prevent influenza in these infants. These very young infants are more likely to be hospitalized if they contract influenza than even the elderly.

Women who are pregnant are at increased risk for hospitalization should they develop influenza, and they should be vaccinated to protect themselves from influenza and to help ensure a healthy pregnancy and baby. Infants younger than 6 months of age cannot be vaccinated against influenza. Vaccinating pregnant women offers these infants passive immunity.

Influenza comes on very suddenly. The symptoms usually include high fever, aches, chills, headache, cough, sore throat and a stuffy or blocked nose. Children, especially infants and toddlers, may have additional symptoms that adults usually don't experience, including ear aches, nausea and vomiting. People infected with influenza can spread the virus even before their symptoms appear and for five to seven days after. Children spread influenza for even longer.

-more-

About the *Childhood Influenza Immunization Coalition*

The *Childhood Influenza Immunization Coalition* was established by the National Foundation for Infectious Diseases (NFID) to protect infants, children and adolescents from influenza by communicating with “one strong voice” the need to make influenza immunization a national health priority. The *Coalition* seeks to address and improve the alarmingly low influenza immunization rates among children.

The *Coalition* has launched a new Web site, www.PreventChildhoodInfluenza.org, to provide parents, health care professionals and media with current information about influenza and influenza vaccination, along with tips for preparing children for vaccination, an influenza risk calculator and frequently asked questions about influenza vaccines.

Coalition members include Allergy & Asthma Network Mothers of Asthmatics, American Academy of Pediatrics, American College of Cardiology, American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, American Lung Association, American Medical Association, American Public Health Association, Asian and Pacific Islander American Health Forum, Association of State and Territorial Health Officials, Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America, Canyon Ranch Institute, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Families Fighting Flu, Inc., Immune Deficiency Foundation, Immunization Action Coalition, Kaiser Permanente-Northern California, National Association for the Education of Young Children, National Association of Community Health Centers, National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners, National Association of School Nurses, National Foundation for Infectious Diseases, National Hispanic Medical Association, National Medical Association, Parents of Kids with Infectious Diseases and Society for Adolescent Medicine.

The *Childhood Influenza Immunization Coalition* initiatives are made possible through an unrestricted educational grant to NFID from sanofi pasteur.

About NFID

The National Foundation for Infectious Diseases (NFID) is a non-profit, tax-exempt (501c3) organization founded in 1973 and dedicated to educating the public and health care professionals about

the causes, treatment and prevention of infectious diseases. For more information, please visit www.nfid.org.

About Canyon Ranch Institute

Canyon Ranch Institute is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to inspiring and educating people across America so they can make positive, healthy choices for themselves and their families. More information is available at www.canyonranchinstitute.org.

###