**Flu vaccine: Your best shot for avoiding serious illness from the flu**

An annual flu shot is one of the best ways to protect yourself from getting seriously ill with influenza virus. However, getting a dose of flu vaccine does not mean that you are immune to the flu.

Influenza is a respiratory infection that can cause serious complications, particularly in young children, older adults and people with certain medical conditions. Getting an influenza vaccine — though not 100% effective — is the best way to prevent the misery of the flu and its complications. Each year's flu shot offers protection against several of the influenza viruses expected to be in circulation that flu season.

Here are the answers to three of the most common questions about flu shots:

**Who should get the flu vaccine?**

The CDC recommends annual influenza vaccinations for **everyone age 6 months or older**. Vaccination is especially important for people at high risk of influenza complications, including older adults and especially if you have a chronic condition. If you’re not sure if a flu vaccination is right for you, talk with your doctor or another health care provider.

**When should I get a flu shot?**

It's usually best for people in the United States to get their flu vaccine in September and October; however, you can still protect yourself against late flu outbreaks if you get the vaccine in February or later. It takes up to two weeks to build immunity after a flu shot, but you can benefit from the vaccine even if you don't get it until after the flu season starts.

**Why do I need to get vaccinated every year?**

Because flu viruses evolve so quickly, last year's vaccine may not protect you from this year's viruses. New flu vaccines are released *every year* to keep up with rapidly adapting flu viruses.

When you get vaccinated, your immune system produces antibodies to protect you from the viruses included in the vaccine. But antibody levels may decline over time so this is another reason to get a flu shot every year.

For a listing of where flu shots area available in our community, please contact: [AGENCY NAME, PHONE AND/OR WEBSITE]