Dispatch: It's Not Too Soon to Think About Getting Your Flu Shot!

By ACSH Staff — August 19, 2010

The CDC this year is urging that more people get a flu shot, and get it earlier than ever before. For the first time the agency recommends flu vaccinations for everyone over the age of six months, even healthy adults between the ages of 18 and 50, who were not included in the agency’s previous guidelines. The CDC has also moved up the start of flu vaccination season, from October to September.

Thankfully, the nation’s pharmacies are doing their part by making it easier to get vaccinated than ever before. Walgreen’s is offering shots everyday at all of its 7,500 stores (including Duane Reade pharmacies in New York City) during nearly all pharmacy hours. The retailer is even selling flu shot gift cards that cover the vaccine’s $29.99 price — perhaps the perfect gift for the person who has everything — or insurance companies can be billed directly. Rite Aid, meanwhile, has tripled the number of pharmacists that can offer the shot to 7,400, and CVS will let customers book appointments by computer, phone or in-person.

ACSH commends this effort, with Dr. Elizabeth Whelan noting that this is the first year that a high-dose flu shot is available to the elderly.

“The reality is that persons over 65 do not have a robust immune response to the regular seasonal flu shot, which is ironic given that they are the very people who most need the protection,” she says. “But this year Sanofi Pasteur’s Fluzone HD will be available to older Americans, and could have a major impact on reducing the usual 30,000 annual deaths from seasonal flu.”

Dr. Whelan explains that Fluzone HD is so effective in older people because it contains four times the antigen as other flu vaccines.

“This vaccine has been studied and shown to provoke an adequate immune response in the over-65 population,” says ACSH’s Dr. Gilbert Ross.

This year’s shot is a three-in-one that protects against the 2009 H1N1 virus (the “swine flu”) and two other flu strains, influenza B and H3N2.