



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Health Experts and Families Encourage Annual Childhood Flu Vaccination  
to Reduce Flu-Related Illnesses and Deaths in Children**

*Families Fighting Flu and CDC Partner to Declare November 27<sup>th</sup>  
“National Children’s Flu Vaccination Day”*

*More Than 20,000 Children Under Age Five are Hospitalized Each Year Due to the Flu*

Atlanta, GA, November 27, 2007 – Families Fighting Flu, Inc. (FFF), together with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and other health organizations are reminding parents today to get their children, and those who live with and care for them, vaccinated against influenza, or “the flu.” Vaccination is the single best means of protecting children from the flu and preventing the spread of influenza, which can lead to hospitalization and even death. To help raise awareness about the critical importance of annual pediatric influenza vaccination, November 27<sup>th</sup> has been designated as Children’s Flu Vaccination Day, which occurs during the CDC’s annual National Influenza Vaccination Week (NIVW, November 26<sup>th</sup> through December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2007).

“Each year we hear the heart-wrenching stories of parents who have lost a child due to complications from influenza,” said CDC Director Dr. Julie Gerberding. “These stories remind us how critical it is for parents to get their children vaccinated against flu, especially those aged six months to five years, and those with chronic health conditions such as asthma or diabetes. We have more vaccine available this year than ever before, so access to vaccine should be easy, and parents need to make this a top priority.”

Flu vaccination is encouraged anytime between September through January or later, when the influenza season typically peaks.

The flu is a serious illness, especially in children, who are two-to-three times more likely to develop influenza than adults because of their less-developed immune systems. More than 20,000 children under the age of five are hospitalized due to the flu each year, and every year children die in the United States from influenza and its complications. More than 300 children have died from influenza over the past four flu seasons alone. During the 2006-2007 flu season,

of the patients for whom flu vaccination status is known, *94 percent of the children who died had not been vaccinated against the flu.*

“Today we are strongly encouraging all parents to vaccinate their children against the flu,” said Richard Kanowitz, president of Families Fighting Flu. Kanowitz’s four-year-old daughter, Amanda, died suddenly in March 2004 from influenza; Amanda had not been vaccinated against the flu. “Before our daughter died, we had no idea that healthy children could die from the flu - a virus that may be avoided with a simple annual vaccination. We sincerely hope that Children’s Flu Vaccination Day will serve to educate parents about the critical importance of annual flu vaccination in children, and motivate them to get their children vaccinated as soon as possible. A simple shot could very well save your child’s life.”

### **About Influenza**

Influenza, or "the flu," is a highly contagious viral infection of the respiratory tract (nose, throat and lungs). The flu virus tends to spread from November to April, with most cases occurring between December and March. The flu is often confused with the common cold, but flu symptoms tend to develop quickly (usually one to four days after a person is exposed to the flu virus) and are usually more severe than the typical sneezing and congestion associated with a cold. Influenza is often accompanied with fever, headache, extreme tiredness, dry cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, and muscle aches. Nausea, vomiting and diarrhea are also common symptoms in children. A person infected with the flu virus will typically suffer from the illness for approximately seven to 10 days, with five to six days of limited activity and about three days of bed rest.

### **Who Should Get Vaccinated?**

Any child older than 6 months old can get vaccinated against influenza. The CDC currently recommends that all children from six months up to age five get vaccinated against the flu every year, as well as *all persons, including school-aged children, who want to reduce the risk of becoming ill with the flu or transmitting it to others.* This includes: children with certain medical conditions; household contacts (parents, siblings, grandparents, etc.) and out-of-home caregivers of children age zero up to age five; and, children and adults who are household contacts of other high-risk individuals.

School-aged children tend to have higher rates of influenza infection because of their close contact with friends and classmates who frequently spread germs among one another. During particularly bad flu seasons, nearly 30 percent of school-aged children get sick and overall miss about 38 million school days a year. A flu vaccine can help children stay free of influenza during the flu season, and potentially help stop the spread of the virus to their families, friends, teachers and communities.

### **About Families Fighting Flu, Inc.**

Families Fighting Flu, Inc. (FFF) is a non-profit, volunteer-based corporation established in 2004 that is made up of families and healthcare practitioners who have experienced first-hand the death of a child due to the flu, or have had a child experience severe medical complications from the flu. FFF is dedicated to educating people about the severity of influenza and the importance of vaccinating children against the flu every year. Through education and advocacy, FFF hopes

to improve the rates of annual childhood influenza vaccinations and help reduce the number of childhood illnesses and deaths caused by the flu each year.

To learn when or where to get a flu vaccine, contact your health care provider or local health department. For more information about the flu, please visit [www.familiesfightingflu.org](http://www.familiesfightingflu.org), or [www.cdc.gov/flu](http://www.cdc.gov/flu).

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