

NEW JERSEY AIDS/HIV/STD HOTLINE

PRESS RELEASE
October 2016

Health Officials Warn HIV/AIDS Patients to GET VACCINATED for the FLU!

(Newark, NJ) – Influenza (Flu) season poses serious risk for everyone particularly those in high risk groups. HIV/AIDS patients are one of the high risk groups health officials are strongly urging to get their flu (influenza) shot/vaccine. The concern comes from the fact that those with compromised (weakened) immune systems may suffer from flu-related complications like pneumonia due to their increased risk for getting bacterial and viral infections. The flu can result in serious illness and must be viewed as a serious health concern for everyone, but especially for such high risk groups like HIV/AIDS patients.

Since timing of flu season varies from year to year, it is recommended that those infected with HIV get vaccinated as soon as possible to avoid getting the flu and any other flu-related complication. Since the flu is known to infect a large portion of Americans each year, high risk groups need to be extra cautious around others at home, work, and/or social gatherings who might already have the flu and thereby pass it along to them. Being vaccinated will help lower their chances of getting the flu. If by some chance they did get the flu, they will be less likely to suffer severe symptoms and/or complications from the infection.

According to the CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention), HIV/AIDS patients should receive the actual flu shot and not the nasal spray because the nasal spray contains a live flu virus, although it is in a weakened state. Due to cell damage caused by the HIV virus, it's usually thought best to avoid introducing live virus to these patients. Immunity to the flu virus declines over time so health officials recommended that HIV infected persons get vaccinated each year to boost flu protection. In addition to the flu vaccine, HIV infected individuals should get vaccinated against pneumonia as well.

Anyone at any age is at risk for contracting HIV and/or hepatitis. If you do not know your HIV status, don't wait to get tested. The sooner HIV is found the sooner treatment can begin. Early testing can help find the virus before symptoms show so treatment can be started as soon as possible. Getting tested helps identify those infected with HIV and gets them into treatment; helping to prevent the further spread of HIV.

If you are looking to find a free, state-funded testing site near you for initial testing, follow-up care, or have questions about HIV/AIDS, STDs, or hepatitis, contact us (The New Jersey AIDS/HIV/STD Hotline) either by calling 800-624-2377, text/email at 8006242377@njpies.org, or chat via our site at www.njhivstdline.org; TTD/TTY Line (for the hearing impaired) 973-926-8008. We are always here to help 24 hours a day/ 7 days a week! Calls are free and confidential.

Services available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, every day of the year

- Referrals for testing sites and other related services
- HIV/AIDS, STD and Hepatitis Prevention Information
- HIV Counseling and Treatment Locations
- HIV Treatment Information

About NJPIES

As New Jersey's only poison control center, the New Jersey Poison Information & Education System provides information on poison prevention and treatments. Chartered in 1983, NJPIES provides free consultation through telephone hot line services and the Web. Medical professionals such as physicians, registered nurses and pharmacists offer confidential advice regarding poison emergencies and provide information on poison prevention, drugs, food poisoning, animal bites and more. These specialists are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

NJPIES coordinates state poison education and research and is designated as the regional poison center by the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services and the American Association of Poison Control Centers. It tracks incidences of adverse reactions to food, drugs and vaccines in order to monitor potential public health issues and provide data to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. A division of the Department of Emergency Medicine of the New Jersey Medical School of Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey. NJPIES has a state-of-the-art center located on the school's Newark campus. NJPIES is funded, in part, by the NJ Department of Health and the United States Department of Health and Human Services.

New Jersey residents seeking immediate information about treating poison emergencies, and those with any drug information questions, should call the toll-free hot line, **800-222-1222**, any time. The hearing impaired may call **973-926-8008**. For more information, visit www.njpies.org or call **973-972-9280**.

About Rutgers

Established in 1766, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, is America's eighth oldest institution of higher learning and one of the nation's premier public research universities. Serving more than 65,000 students on campuses, centers, institutes and other locations throughout the state, Rutgers is the only public university in New Jersey that is a member of the prestigious Association of American Universities.

Rutgers Biomedical and Health Sciences (RBHS) is the health care education, research, and clinical division of Rutgers University, comprising nine schools and their attendant faculty practices, centers, institutes and clinics; New Jersey's leading comprehensive cancer care center; and New Jersey's largest behavioral health care network.

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