

NEW JERSEY AIDS/HIV/STD HOTLINE

PRESS RELEASE
December 2014

Flu Season Poses Serious Risk for HIV/AIDS Patients GET VACCINATED!

(Newark, NJ) – With the change in the temperature comes the reminder that flu season is here. Health officials strongly urge everyone to get vaccinated against the flu, especially those with compromised immune systems like HIV/AIDS patients. The flu poses serious concern for high risk groups because they are more susceptible to bacterial and viral infections. Since timing of flu season varies from year to year, it is recommended to get vaccinated as soon as possible to avoid the flu and any related complications.

Due to cell damage that HIV causes, it's much more difficult for people living with HIV/AIDS to fight off infections like the flu. This puts them at high risk for developing complications from the flu such as pneumonia. High risk groups especially need to get vaccinated if they will be around others at home, work, or social gatherings who might be infected with the flu and pass it along to them. In addition to the flu vaccine, it is also recommended that HIV infected individuals get vaccinated against pneumonia.

According to the CDC, HIV/AIDS patients should receive the actual flu shot and not the nasal spray because the nasal spray contains a live flu virus although weakened. Since immunity to the flu virus declines over time, it is recommended that those with HIV get vaccinated each year to boost flu protection.

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