

Beating the Flu Bug - Seven Reasons to Get Vaccinated Now

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MELVILLE, N.Y., Oct 2, 2002 (BUSINESS WIRE) -- This week marks the official start of the 2002-2003 flu season, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), which tracks flu cases throughout the United States, encourages "anyone who wants to reduce their chances of catching influenza" to see their physicians and get vaccinated.

Accordingly, Henry Schein, Inc. (Nasdaq:HSIC), one of the nation's leading distributors of influenza vaccine and the first to ship vaccine to physicians across the United States for the 2002-2003 flu season, has compiled seven reasons for people—even healthy individuals—to get vaccinated. These are based on recent research and are in accordance with CDC guidelines for the administration of flu vaccine.

"Many patients do not get vaccinated due to concerns that they will get the flu from the vaccine, that it will make them sick, or because they don't consider themselves to be at high risk. We must let patients and physicians know that a flu vaccine will not give you the flu, and that it is not too late to receive a flu shot, even if it is administered in December and even later into the season," said Janet McElhaney, M.D., Associate Professor of Medicine and Director of the Glennan Center for Geriatrics and Gerontology, Eastern Virginia Medical School in Norfolk, Virginia and a consultant to Henry Schein. "Henry Schein has secured an increased supply of flu vaccine this season and working with the CDC the Company is determined to see that the vaccine is used entirely. As such, my recommendation is that everyone who can be vaccinated, should be."

Utilizing the Flu Vaccine Supply: Seven Compelling Reasons

- 1. Influenza kills as many annually as H.I.V. In an editorial in the August 2000 issue of the Journal of Clinical Infectious Diseases, Dr. Gregory A. Poland of the Mayo Clinic estimates that, on average, as many Americans die from influenza each year (20,000) as from H.I.V., the virus that causes AIDS.
- 2. The flu's impact surpasses other feared viruses. This year's West Nile outbreak—the largest since the virus first appeared in the U.S. in 1999—has resulted in 1,641 hospitalizations and 80 deaths to date. By contrast, the flu hospitalizes an estimated 114,000 Americans each year, killing 20,000 of them.
- 3. The flu virus is a constantly moving target. The Public Health Laboratory Service has indicated that the influenza virus readily mutates every flu season. Therefore, last year's vaccination won't be effective against this year's strain. The flu vaccine, which is updated annually to immunize against new strains of virus, provides an additional safeguard for patients.
- 4. Seniors are at risk. The Journal of Clinical Infectious Diseases editorial adds that while up to 90 percent of those who die from influenza are over age 65, only 60 percent of the elderly are vaccinated. The problem is compounded, according to the American Society of Internal Medicine, because few older patients keep immunization records or check with their physicians. The Journal of Clinical Infectious Disease reports that vaccinations reduce deaths or hospitalizations from influenza by up to half in this age group.
- 5. Older African-Americans have special risk factors. According to the CDC, fewer than half of African-Americans over age 65 are vaccinated each year compared to Caucasians, placing thousands at increased risk for influenza-related hospitalizations and death.
- 6. Flu shots can prevent an asthma attack. Influenza poses a major health risk to asthma sufferers, yet only one in 10 people with the condition gets a flu shot. Recent research by the American Lung Association (ALA) found that flu vaccines are safe for people with asthma. This month is Healthy Lung Month, and the ALA urges those with asthma to get vaccinated to help thwart an attack during flu season.
- 7. Healthy adults can benefit, remain productive. A study in the August 20th issue of the Annals of Internal Medicine found that an annual flu shot was economically beneficial for healthy adults, reducing the average 2.8 days lost from work, as well as the costs associated with treatment.

"Although 90 percent of flu-related deaths are in the 65 and older age group, the new research demonstrates the obvious health benefits of flu vaccinations in younger, healthy people," added Dr. McElhaney.

"The CDC calls influenza the 'single most vaccine-preventable illness,' so it is our goal to help maximize the distribution and utilization of this year's flu vaccine supply," said Michael Racioppi, RPh, President, Medical Group, Henry Schein. "For the 2002-2003 flu season, we plan to ship at least 17 million doses of flu vaccine, about 15 percent more than we have in past seasons. The total overall supply will be between 90 and 97 million doses—the highest in three years—which means 10 million more doses than last year will be available, enabling more healthy adults to get vaccinated."

For more information on the 2002-2003 supply and to place an order, physicians are encouraged to call (800) 772-4346 to speak with a Henry Schein representative. Henry Schein has flu vaccine available for immediate shipment. Orders also can be placed through the Company's Web site, www.henryschein.com. To review the CDC recommendations, please see www.cdc.gov.

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The Company operates its four business groups-Dental, Medical, International and Technology-through a centralized and automated distribution network, which provides customers in more than 125 countries with a comprehensive selection of over 80,000 national and Henry Schein private-brand products. Henry Schein also offers a wide range of innovative value-added practice solutions, including such leading practice management software systems as DENTRIX(R) and Easy Dental(R), for dental practices, and AVImark(R) for veterinary clinics, which are installed in over 44,000 practices; and ArubA(R), Henry Schein's electronic catalog and ordering system.

Headquartered in Melville, New York, Henry Schein employs over 6,700 people in 16 countries. The Company's 2001 sales reached a record \$2.6 billion. For more information, visit the Henry Schein Web site at www.henryschein.com.

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