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***CHILDHOOD INFLUENZA IMMUNIZATION COALITION ISSUES NEW REPORT  
TO HELP IMPROVE LOW CHILDHOOD INFLUENZA IMMUNIZATION RATES***

***New Coalition Web Site Launched to Provide Educational Resources to Health Care Professionals,  
Parents and Media about Serious Nature of Influenza, Importance of Annual Immunization***

Bethesda, Maryland, October 15, 2007 — The *Childhood Influenza Immunization Coalition (CIIC)* has launched a Web site, [www.PreventChildhoodInfluenza.org](http://www.PreventChildhoodInfluenza.org), to support its newly issued report that calls for improved childhood influenza immunization rates in the United States. The *Coalition*, made up by 25 of the nation's leading public health, medical, patient and parent groups, was formed in 2007 by the National Foundation for Infectious Diseases (NFID) to make childhood immunization a national health priority and to educate parents about childhood influenza and the benefits of annual immunization.

Disturbed by low influenza immunization rates of only 20.6 percent among recommended children, the *Coalition* issued the new report, *Improving Childhood Influenza Immunization Rates to Protect Our Nation's Children* (available online). The report highlights the need to improve immunization rates among children of all ages and outlines strategies for health care professionals and parents to take to improve immunization rates among this vulnerable population.

In addition, the *Coalition* developed a new Web site, [www.PreventChildhoodInfluenza.org](http://www.PreventChildhoodInfluenza.org), designed to help educate health care professionals as well as parents, guardians and other caregivers about the serious nature of influenza and the importance of annual immunization for children. Beyond its educational messages, the Web site provides materials designed to help health care professionals to reach those in need of annual influenza vaccination.

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“Annual influenza immunization is safe and protects our children from disease. Many children across our nation are vulnerable to influenza infection every year because they are not vaccinated. Our *Coalition* initiatives provide parents and health care professionals with important information to encourage the vaccination of children and their close contacts,” said *Coalition* Chair, Richard H. Carmona, M.D., M.P.H., FACS, 17th Surgeon General of the United States (2002-2006), President of Canyon Ranch Institute and Distinguished Professor of Public Health, The University of Arizona Mel and Enid Zuckerman College of Public Health. “More information about influenza immunization, including the new *Childhood Influenza Immunization Coalition* Report, is available at [www.PreventChildhoodInfluenza.org](http://www.PreventChildhoodInfluenza.org).”

The *Coalition* Report illustrates the considerable impact of influenza, with deaths occurring in children of all ages. In addition, it found that multifaceted approaches are needed to increase childhood immunization rates. Two key findings include offering influenza vaccinations at **all medical visits** and **broadening the vaccination period**. Health care professionals and parents/guardians need to “re-think” the traditional immunization season by seeking and giving vaccination as soon as vaccine is available in their communities and using every opportunity to get vaccinated throughout the fall and winter months, well beyond the New Year.

“The *Coalition* Report shows that influenza infection rates are highest among children and that each year this serious disease causes more than 20,000 hospitalizations and nearly 100 deaths in American children younger than 5 years of age,” said *Coalition* Moderator, Carol J. Baker, M.D., FAAP, FIDSA, President of NFID and Professor of Pediatrics, Molecular Virology and Microbiology, Baylor College of Medicine.

#### **About [www.PreventChildhoodInfluenza.org](http://www.PreventChildhoodInfluenza.org)**

This comprehensive Web site provides health care professionals with downloadable and customizable in-practice tools to help educate parents and older children about the seriousness of influenza and the importance of annual vaccination.

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Consumers will find an influenza fact sheet, frequently asked questions about childhood influenza, personal stories from families affected by influenza and public service messages. There also is an interactive Influenza Risk Calculator—an easy-to-use assessment tool that allows individuals to input personal health information and instantly determine if they, or their loved ones, should get vaccinated. A reminder system, called “Stay Informed!,” allows visitors to register for ongoing immunization updates and receive major *Coalition* announcements.

Media also have a special resource center on the site that provides influenza backgrounders and other key materials to help facilitate reporting on childhood influenza and immunization.

### **About Influenza Vaccination Recommendations**

To protect children from this serious and potentially deadly disease, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends annual influenza vaccination of all children 6 months up to 5 years of age. Vaccination is also recommended for any child at least 6 months of age with a compromised immune system and certain underlying medical conditions (e.g., asthma, diabetes, heart disease, immune deficiency). Vaccination is also recommended for close contacts of any of these children, and for anyone who lives with or cares for infants 0 to 6 months of age since this is the **only** way to prevent influenza in these infants. These very young infants are more likely to be hospitalized if they contract influenza than even the elderly.

Women who are pregnant are at increased risk for hospitalization should they develop influenza, and they should be vaccinated to protect themselves from influenza and to help ensure a healthy pregnancy and baby. Infants younger than 6 months of age cannot be vaccinated against influenza. Vaccinating pregnant women offers these infants passive immunity.

Influenza comes on very suddenly. The symptoms usually include high fever, aches, chills, headache, cough, sore throat and a stuffy or blocked nose. Children, especially infants and toddlers, may have additional symptoms that adults usually don't experience, including ear aches, nausea and vomiting. People infected with influenza can spread the virus even before their symptoms appear and for five to seven days after. Children spread influenza for even longer.

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### **About the *Childhood Influenza Immunization Coalition***

*CIIC* was established by the National Foundation for Infectious Diseases (NFID) to protect infants, children and adolescents from influenza by communicating with “one strong voice” the need to make influenza immunization a national health priority. *CIIC* seeks to address and improve the alarmingly low influenza immunization rates among children.

*Coalition* members include Allergy & Asthma Network Mothers of Asthmatics, American Academy of Pediatrics, American College of Cardiology, American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, American Lung Association, American Medical Association, American Public Health Association, Asian and Pacific Islander American Health Forum, Association of State and Territorial Health Officials, Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America, Canyon Ranch Institute, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Families Fighting Flu, Inc., Immune Deficiency Foundation, Immunization Action Coalition, Kaiser Permanente-Northern California, National Association for the Education of Young Children, National Association of Community Health Centers, National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners, National Association of School Nurses, National Foundation for Infectious Diseases, National Hispanic Medical Association, National Medical Association, Parents of Kids with Infectious Diseases and Society for Adolescent Medicine.

The *Childhood Influenza Immunization Coalition* initiatives are made possible through an unrestricted educational grant to NFID from sanofi pasteur.

### **About NFID**

The National Foundation for Infectious Diseases (NFID) is a non-profit, tax-exempt (501c3) organization founded in 1973 and dedicated to educating the public and health care professionals about the causes, treatment and prevention of infectious diseases. For more information, please visit [www.nfid.org](http://www.nfid.org).

**About Canyon Ranch Institute**

Canyon Ranch Institute is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to inspiring and educating people across America so they can make positive, healthy choices for themselves and their families.

More information is available at [www.canyonranchinstitute.org](http://www.canyonranchinstitute.org).

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