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NEWS RELEASE

Flu Vaccinations for Children with Chronic Medical Conditions

For decades, yearly flu vaccinations have been recommended for children six months and older with chronic medical conditions. However, vaccination rates for these children remain substantially lower than other childhood immunizations.

"There are many reasons cited for this, including lack of awareness that chronic medical conditions can increase flu-related complications, or appreciation for the benefits of flu vaccination," said Sue Smith, Deputy Director of the Otsego County Department of Health.

Yearly flu vaccination is recommended for all school-aged children and their families who want to reduce their risk of becoming ill. It is strongly recommended for children aged 6 months up through their fifth birthday and for all children with chronic medical conditions, such as:

- Asthma and other chronic pulmonary diseases;
- Cardiovascular disorders;
- Immunosuppressive disorders or therapy;
- Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV);
- Sickle cell anemia;
- Diabetes;
- Diseases that require long-term aspirin therapy; and
- Chronic kidney or metabolic diseases.

Thirty to forty percent of all children are infected with influenza each year. In addition, children are also responsible for spreading the flu to family members and people in the community more than any other group. Children with chronic medical conditions, such as asthma, are at higher risk of developing serious complications, as well as visiting emergency rooms and being hospitalized.

"That's why it's important to have your child immunized against the flu every year. Don't let a routine visit with your health care provider be another missed opportunity for protection! Ask your provider to immunize your child with the flu shot or the flu nasal spray," Sue Smith said.

For more information on the flu, visit the New York State Department of Health's influenza web page at: <http://www.health.state.ny.us/diseases/communicable/influenza/>

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