

Long-Term Care Survey Alert

Infection Control: Ready for a Quick Flu Vaccination Update?

Be aware of these vaccine options.

Infection control expert **James Marx, MS, RN, CIC**, provides the following pointers on flu vaccinations for the 2011-2012 season.

"Facilities should start offering the flu vaccine as soon as the vaccine is available," advises Marx. "Those instructions haven't changed from last year."

Also: "The flu vaccine is the same as last year's -- except this year it's recommended that everyone over age 6 months get it. It's not just for high-risk groups," says Marx, principal of BroadStreet Solutions in San Diego.

"The high-dose flu vaccine is still available for people 65 and older," Marx relays. "But the CDC isn't recommending that over the standard dose," he adds. "There have been studies showing that older people don't have the immune response that younger people do to the flu vaccine, which is one reason the high dose vaccine was developed."

Potential option: "There's a new intradermal flu vaccine for people up to age 64, which is something nursing facilities should consider," Marx reports.

Keep in mind: "Several studies have shown that increasing flu vaccination of healthcare staff really helps," he adds. Marx says he isn't aware "of any nursing homes requiring staff to get flu vaccinations. Some hospitals do require vaccination or many require non-vaccinated employees to wear a face mask when working."

Must-do: When giving residents or staff vaccinations, be aware of the requirement to give them the most current version of the vaccine information statement, says Marx (<http://www.immunize.org/catg.d/p2027.pdf>).