



November 22, 2004

**RE: Updated Houston-Harris County Influenza Vaccine Prioritization List**

Due to this year's shortage of influenza vaccine the City of Houston Department of Health and Human Services and the Harris County Public Health and Environmental Services convened a local panel of experts to make recommendations regarding distribution of remaining local vaccine supplies. The panel included public health, infectious disease, virology, emergency medicine and medical ethics experts.

The panel recommends persons who meet the criteria of the following two groups should be given vaccine. **Although all persons in the community who meet the criteria in either of the following two groups should be given vaccine, the "Special Outreach Group" includes those individuals for whom practitioners should make a special effort to contact and encourage vaccination.** Persons in the "Other Flu Vaccine Recipient Group" should also be given vaccine if they make themselves available for vaccination. Vaccine should not be withheld from anyone who meets the criteria in either of the two groups listed below.

**Special Outreach Groups:**

- Ambulatory seniors age 65 years and older with moderate/severe chronic conditions
- Nursing Home and Long-Term Care (LTC) facility employees in whom LAIV (Live Attenuated Influenza Vaccine, or FluMist) is not recommended.
- Healthcare employees providing direct patient care to stem cell transplant patients in isolation.

**Other Flu Vaccine Recipient Groups:**

- Health Care Workers age 50 years and above who provide direct patient care for High Risk Patients. High risk patients include those with severe cardiac and respiratory illnesses, and those with impaired immune systems.
- Persons age 2 years and older who have an underlying, long-term illness requiring on-going medical care.
- Persons age 6 months to 18 years of age who take daily aspirin.
- Household contacts who live with or take care of a high risk infant under 6 months of age. High risk infants include those recent graduates from Neonatal Intensive Care Units, those with bronchopulmonary dysplasia or other high risk conditions.
- Women who are pregnant this flu season.

NOTE: Nursing Home, Long Term Care Facility and other Healthcare Employers are **strongly** advised to provide LAIV to eligible employees. Healthcare workers caring for stem cell transplant patients in isolation are NOT to receive LAIV.