



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Mystic Valley Elder Services Urges You to Get Your Flu Shot
Early this Year—Not the Flu**

(Malden, MA)— With the colder weather and the flu preparing to settle in for the winter, you need to take proactive steps against the flu. Public health officials are urging Americans to get their seasonal flu vaccine early this year, in case the U.S. follows Australia's season in which the virus hit many people early.

Annual flu vaccinations are important to older adults. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), up to 62,000 people died from the flu last year, and the vast majority of these flu deaths were people over age 65.

A new vaccine needs to be created each year because the strains change and the immunity you gained from years past has waned; you do not retain it. This year's annual flu shot will offer protection against the influenza viruses expected to be in transmission this flu season.

Influenza is a respiratory infection that can cause serious complications, particularly to young children, older adults and people with certain medical conditions. In the U.S., influenza is the cause of about 114,000 hospitalizations each year. The ideal time frame for getting a flu shot is during the months of October and November but you're encouraged to take action as soon as possible this year.

People who are over the age of 65 are at a higher risk of developing complications resulting from the flu than younger, healthy adults. The human immune defenses become weaker with age, so influenza can be a very serious disease for people 65 and older. Older adults with conditions like asthma, diabetes, heart disease, and kidney disease are at high risk and need to get a flu vaccine. In addition, people who are active and healthy can benefit from the protection the flu vaccine offers.

People of all ages should pay particular attention to their level of exposure to a number of germs and viruses: Here are some tips:

- Be aware of those you come into contact with—avoid others who are sick
- Be aware of the multitude of surfaces you touch on a daily basis.
- Wash your hands frequently.
- Carry small bottles of antiseptic hand gel.
- Cover your mouth when you cough or sneeze.

People worry about possible side effects but the flu shot's benefits heavily outweigh the side effects. Most people experience nothing more than a little soreness in the arm after being vaccinated. Other mild problems could include fever or aches, which disappear within a few days.

Anyone with a severe egg allergy should not get the vaccine because the vaccine virus is grown in eggs. People who are currently ill or just recovering from an illness should consult their physician before arranging to be vaccinated. In most instances, they may be advised to wait until they are completely recovered.

The vaccine usually protects most people from the flu, however, sometimes a person who receives the flu vaccine can get the virus, but it will frequently be milder than without the vaccine. The flu vaccine will not protect you from other viruses that sometimes feel like the flu.

If you have not already gotten your flu shot, please reach out to your healthcare provider.

Information partially provided by the Mayo Clinic.

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About Mystic Valley Elder Services

Located in Malden, Mass., Mystic Valley Elder Services is a non-profit agency that provides essential home- and community-based care and resources to elders, adults living with disabilities, and caregivers of any income level who reside in Chelsea, Everett, Malden, Medford, Melrose, North Reading, Reading, Revere, Stoneham, Wakefield and Winthrop. Agency services include coordination of home care, transportation, Meals on Wheels, and information and referrals. For more information, please call (781) 324-7705 or visit www.mves.org.