



## SENIOR AMBASSADORS COALITION

Our Mission: To enhance the dignity, respect and quality of life for area seniors. September 2010

### **'Tis the Season! (Flu Season)**

Influenza (flu) season is fast approaching. Although this year's flu season will likely not be the subject of as intense media control as last year's season, the flu remains a potentially dangerous problem. Historically, seniors and the very young are at the greatest risk of complications from the flu. The 2009 H1N1 pandemic appeared to disproportionately affect young people, but the risk to seniors remains. Each year, up to 36,000 deaths in the United States can be attributed to the flu or its complications. At this time, it is uncertain what strains of flu will be most prominent during the 2010-2011 flu season. Regardless of the strain of flu circulating, there are some things that you can do to protect your health.

**Get your flu vaccine** - The old adage of "forewarned is forearmed" certainly applies to your body's immune system. Vaccines expose your body to a fragment of the flu virus, giving your immune system a

"sneak peak" at what the virus looks like, and allowing it to prepare. Once the immune system is primed, the body can respond faster to a subsequent flu infection, preventing or attenuating the symptoms of the flu. Although no vaccines are 100% effective in preventing the flu, the flu vaccine is probably the single most important thing you can do to protect yourself. This season's flu vaccine targets three different strains of flu, including last year's pandemic H1N1.

**Encourage those around you to get the flu vaccine** - One of the best ways to protect yourself from the flu is to make sure those around you are protected as well. Caregivers, medical staff and families of individuals at risk for complications from the flu, can inadvertently spread the disease unless they are also protected. Influenza is easily spread from person to person, and transmission is possible up to 24 hours before the infected individual even has symptoms! Anyone who is in regular contact with elder individuals, young

children, or those with compromised immune systems should be vaccinated.

**Wash your hands** - Influenza is spread by contact with respiratory secretions. If an ill individual coughs in his hand and then touches a doorknob, the virus can survive for hours, waiting for the next person to touch the doorknob. Frequent hand washing can decrease the risk of acquiring the virus. No special soaps are necessary. Plain soap and water is fine, and hand sanitizers are a convenient, acceptable alternative.

**Control your co-morbidities** - The majority of deaths associated with the flu are from complications of the flu rather than the flu itself. Co-morbidities such as diabetes, heart disease and chronic lung disease can all predispose patients to flu complications. Make sure you have good control of your baseline medical problems going into the flu season. A patient who has poorly controlled heart failure will have a more difficult time with the flu than a patient whose heart

failure is under good control. Also, be cautious of over-the-counter cold medications if you have heart disease, as many of these medications can raise blood pressure. Talk with your doctor before taking over-the-counter cold and flu medications, if you have chronic medical problems for which you take medications on a daily basis.



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**SAC Committees**

Elder Abuse Awareness  
Eldercare Conference  
Community Investment  
(Pursuit of grants)  
Vials of Life  
Transportation  
Hunger Relief Through  
Grocery Delivery  
Community & Media  
Outreach  
Finances & Fund Raising  
Senior Fall Festival  
Legislative & Advocacy  
Outreach

**SAC Meeting Dates:  
Noon, at ASCA**

**September 21<sup>st</sup>  
October 19<sup>th</sup>**

**SAVE THE DATE**

**Benefit Golf  
Tournament  
October 8, 2010**

**Senior Fall Festival  
October 14, 2010**

**Christmas Luncheon  
December 2010  
Date to be announced**

**Eldercare Conference  
April 14, 2011**

**CONTACT US**

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