Navy prepares Sailors, families for upcoming flu season

By Bureau of Medicine and Surgery Public Affairs

The Navy recognizes August as Immunization Awareness Month and, with flu season quickly approaching, Navy leadership are urging service members, veterans and family members to be aware of the risks of seasonal flu and to receive their scheduled vaccinations.

Influenza or "flu" has the potential to significantly impact Navy force readiness and missions. In the United States, influenza results in more than 25 million reported cases, more than 150,000 hospitalizations due to serious complications and more than 30,000 deaths annually.

According to the Navy Surgeon General Vice Adm. Adam M. Robinson Jr., immunization is one of the best ways to prevent the spread of seasonal influenza.

"Influenza is not the common cold," said Robinson. "It can be a severe to life-threatening disease and getting an annual flu vaccine immunization protects us from getting the disease or becoming severely ill. The seasonal flu vaccine not only helps protect vaccinated individuals, but also helps protect entire communities by preventing and reducing the spread of the disease."

Navy medical officials anticipate the supply of vaccine to Navy medical treatment facilities will arrive by late September and do not anticipate any availability issues like those experienced last fall.

This year's seasonal influenza vaccine contains three inactive virus components based on an estimate of the most prevalent strains for the upcoming season. The 2009 H1N1 pandemic strain is incorporated as one of the three 2010-2011 seasonal influenza vaccine components.

New influenza strains with the potential to become pandemic have not yet been identified for 2010-2011 but the possibility remains that a new virus strain could emerge, become a pandemic and require an additional influenza vaccine. The Armed Forces Health Surveillance Center will closely monitor the emergence of potential new virus strains.

A corpsman administers an influenza vaccination (flu shot) to a Sailor at U.S. Naval Hospital Yokosuka. With flu season quickly approaching, Navy leadership are urging service members, veterans and family members to be aware of the risks of seasonal flu and to receive their scheduled vaccinations.
U.S. Navy photo by PH3 John E. Woods

"Let me assure you that the vaccine is safe, effective, and will be widely available beginning next month," said Robinson.

Robinson also states that all personnel and their family members can limit the effects of the seasonal and H1N1 flu by adopting some basic preventive health practices such as covering their mouth when they cough, washing hands often, and avoiding touching your eyes, nose or mouth.

"Following these simple good practices will help us all stay healthy during this flu season," said Robinson.

For more information, Naval Administrative Message NAVADMIN 255/10 details the Navy's Influenza Vaccination and Reporting Policy and is located at http://www.npc.navy.mil/NR/rdonlyres/C24F4F7E-721A-4DC4-8796-96EACD4F7DEA/0/NAV10255.txt.

Million Dollar Sailor program helps to prepare for financial future

Story and photo by Mark Elrod, CFAY Public Affairs

As part of the Navy Personal Financial Management program, Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka (CFAY) Fleet and Family Support Center (FFSC) is helping Sailors, family members and Department of Defense civilians learn how to prepare for their financial futures by offering Million Dollar Sailor (MDS) program classes, which are currently scheduled Aug. 30-31 and Sept. 1-2.

According to FFSC Financial Counselor Michael Spiltener, the average household carries $3,000 in credit card debt. Eighty-four percent of security clearance revocations and denials are due to financial mismanagement. Many Sailors find themselves in financial trouble due to poor choices or lack of financial knowledge. Financial success requires changes in behavior, because behavior modification will always win over the math.

"The class is designed to assist Sailors and their families to successfully navigate through the transitions of Navy life and the financial challenges that accompany them," said Spiltener, who teaches the MDS classes.

Economic issues are affecting people throughout the world, regardless of their income or financial position in life. Houses are being foreclosed on, business are going under. A lot of it is attributed to improper financial management.

"Considering the market being the way it is; it's that way for a reason," said Fire Controlman 2nd class Cody Preston, of *USS Curtis Wilbur* (DDG 54), who attended the class. "People have failed. People have made poor decisions and this [program] will pull people away from those poor decisions that they are tempted to make."

Spiltener said the biggest financial mistake that people make is not having a spending plan. They do not properly monitor and track their incoming and outgoing cash flow.

"I think most people have good intentions when they are managing their money, but they are missing a lot of information," said Spiltener. "They're just looking at their ATM receipts and their bank statement and that's their 'spending plan.' You really need to track things and know what's coming in and what's going out. You need to know where your dollar is going and that way you can reach your financial goals. Without that information, you're just living paycheck to paycheck."

(Center) FFSC Financial Counselor Michael Spiltener helps students with an exercise during the Million Dollar Sailor class held at the CFAY Community Readiness Center. The next class is currently scheduled for Aug. 30-31 and Sept. 1-2.

According to Spiltener there are 10 modules that are covered during the two-day class.

"We go over everything from 'A' to 'Z,'" Spiltener said. "We start off with the basic spending plan, in other words, a budget. Then we go into car buying, then home buying. We go into banking. We talk about insurance. We've got the whole package deal of what a Sailor would need to know to set up their road map to their financial success."

One of the most important things that Preston said he took away from the class was to avoid impulse buying.

"They pound that into the ground, 'Don't impulse buy.' Whenever you get your paycheck you're tempted to go to the NEX (Navy Exchange), or any other retail place for that matter, and they have something on sale, or something that just stands out at you, and they teach you to go out and research the product first," said Preston.

Though the program is called Million Dollar Sailor, the information taught in the classes is not exclusive to Sailors, all Status of Forces Agreement sponsored personnel are authorized to attend as well and military spouses are highly encouraged to attend.

"Financial management often falls on the military spouse because of deployments and long working hours, so it's important that spouses have the information and tools they need to manage the finances in the service member's absence." said FFSC Financial Educator and military spouse, Tatum Bilbro.

Knowing the options and resources that are available is the key to being able to succeed financially.

"The most common excuse for getting into financial trouble is, 'I didn't know,'" said Splitener. "Well, if you come to the class then you will know, because we're going to give you all the information, tools and resources you need to set up your own financial plan to reach your goals."

Call FFSC at 243-9910 to sign up for the class or for more information.

The editor asks:

"Did you know, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), more than nine million American children between the ages of six and 19 are overweight?

"Millions of children participate in youth sports each year. The summer months are a great time to actively promote sports involvement for children. Sports are not only fun and teach children about teamwork, but they are a big help in the fight against obesity. Obesity can lead to a long list of future health concerns, including diabetes, high blood pressure, sleep apnea, asthma, depression and orthopedic conditions.

"There are two main factors contributing to obesity: nutrition and physical activity. If children (or adults) consume more calories than they are burning, there is a good chance they will gain weight. Decreasing calorie consumption and increasing physical activity to burn more calories than consumed is the simple "recipe" for weight loss.

"Participation in sporting activities is a great way for kids to exercise. Consistent, daily physical activity is helpful in weight loss and the prevention of weight gain or regain."