Vaccine helps protect individuals, community from flu

By Lt. Patricia Roldan, USNH Yokosuka

Flu season is here and now is the time for all of us to take the proper actions to protect personnel, beneficiaries, co-workers and family members from getting seasonal flu.

One of the most important steps to protecting ourselves and each other from the flu is getting vaccinated.

The vaccine not only helps protect vaccinated individuals, but also helps protect entire communities by preventing or reducing the spread of the disease.

U.S. Naval Hospital (USNH) Yokosuka will make the seasonal influenza vaccine available to all USNH beneficiaries, Department of Defense Dependent schools employees, dependents of active duty and government employees during a mass immunization event at the Kinnick High School cafeteria Oct. 20 through 23 from 12 to 6 p.m. and at Ikego Elementary School Oct. 19 from 1 to 6 p.m. The vaccine is also now available for family members at the Negishi Medical Annex.

Active duty, Department of Defense civilian employees and government contractors can receive the vaccine during immunization events scheduled at tenant commands Sept. 28 through Oct. 16.

Hospitalman Apprentice Jose Cuevas waits to receive his seasonal influenza vaccine at USNH Yokosuka.

Photo by Richard McManus

Additionally, the vaccine is available now at the hospital's immunizations clinic for adults in high-risk groups for complications from getting the flu such as pregnant women and those with asthma or chronic medical conditions, and for children in high-risk groups.

There are two types of vaccines available this year: the live attenuated intranasal vaccine (LAIV), most commonly known as "Flumist®," and the inactivated vaccine, most commonly known as the "flu shot."

The FluMist® is a nasal spray flu vaccine made with live, weakened flu viruses that do not cause the flu and is approved for use in healthy people 2 to 49 years of age who are not pregnant.

The "flu shot" is an inactivated vaccine (containing killed virus) that is given with a needle, usually in the arm. The flu shot is approved for use in people older than 6 months, including healthy people and people with chronic medical conditions. Each vaccine contains three influenza viruses, which change each year. About two weeks after vaccination, antibodies that provide protection against influenza virus infection develop in the body.

Most beneficiaries between ages 2 and 49 will receive the Flumist® unless the person does not qualify due to an allergy or medical condition.

The Food and Drug Administration has reported that the seasonal flu vaccine will not protect people against the new H1N1 virus.

A separate vaccine to protect against that flu strain is now under development and the vaccine is expected to be available sometime in the fall.

In addition to getting vaccinated, there are other steps each and every person can take to prevent the spread of germs and viruses.

These are effective in preventing the spread of both the seasonal and H1N1 flu.

• Avoid close contact with people who are sick, when you are sick, keep your distance from others to protect them for getting sick too.

• If possible, stay home from work, school and errands when you are sick. You will help prevent others from catching your illness.

• Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. It may prevent those around you from getting sick.

• Wash your hands often to help protect you from germs.

• Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs are often spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his/her eyes, nose or mouth.

We encourage everyone, particularly those at high risk for complications from the flu, to get vaccinated. Immunization remains the primary method or reducing seasonal influenza illness and its complications.

Those receiving the seasonal flu vaccine should bring along their "shot card." In the event that dates/times change, an announcement will be made through the hospital's Web site, the base commander's channel and the base newspaper.

To learn about influenza, the vaccine and its benefits, please visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Web site at http://www.cdc.gov/flu.

Navy Exchange customers to see bigger savings

By Kristine M. Sturkie, Navy Exchange Service Command Public Affairs

A recent survey conducted by an independent group recently proved that the average price of retail goods sold at Navy Exchanges save customers an average of 26 percent on products purchased, in addition to the tax-free benefits.

"I am so thrilled with these results," said Tess Paquette, Navy Exchange Service Command (NEXCOM) senior vice president, and chief merchandising officer. "The 26 percent savings is the average amount customers will save when they shop at their NEX (Navy Exchange). These savings, combined with our 'Best Brands, Best Buys' and 'Price Cut' pricing strategies, help customers stretch their budgets even further. These are real savings that customers can achieve when they shop at the NEX."

Retail Data, the independent research firm that conducted the survey, compared the prices of approximately 400 items in the NEX against major retailers across the continental United States and Hawaii.

The results determined that NEX customers save between three and 86 percent over well-known civilian retailers.

To determine the percentage of savings, the same items were surveyed from region to region and included items such as major appliances, consumer electronics, furniture, clothing, house wares and sporting goods. The different stores shopped comparatively were categorized as discount stores, mass merchants, full-line department stores and category-killer stores.

According to the annual survey, in each of the 36 departments shopped during the survey throughout comparative civilian retail outlets, NEXs changes clearly provided a better level of savings to its customers. In the video games and computer software departments, customers saved an average of 87 percent; in domestics, an average savings of 50 percent; boys clothing, 42 percent; in girls clothing, an average of 29 percent; house wares, 27 percent savings; cosmetics, nearly 21 percent in savings; and in major appliances, an average of six percent.

"Our mantra has always been 'to take care of our Sailors and families by offering quality merchandise at a savings and providing the best customer service … especially during these tough economic times," said Paquette. "It's just the right thing to do and the reason NEXs exist. It's great knowing that we're delivering on what we work so hard to provide for our customers."

Retail Data's detailed survey also classified savings based on which region of the country customers live.

For instance, customers in Pearl Harbor saved 29.68 percent; customers in Bethesda, Md., saved 27 percent; in San Diego a 26.22 percent savings; Everett, Wash., 26 percent savings; Jacksonville, Fla., 25.83 percent savings; in Pensacola, Fla., a savings of 25.66 percent; Great Lakes, Ill., 25.04 percent; and customers in Norfolk, Va., saved 23.55 percent.

For more news from Navy Exchange Service Command, visit www.navy.mil/local/nexcom/.