



NATIONAL FOUNDATION FOR INFECTIOUS DISEASES (NFID)

NATIONAL CONSUMER SURVEY: Parents More Flu Aware and More Likely to Get Kids Vaccinated

Influenza claims the lives of an average of 100 children in the U.S. annually and hospitalizes around 20,000, many of whom were previously healthy. As such, seasonal influenza vaccination recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) were expanded in 2008 to include children 6 months through 18 years of age, up from 6 months to 5 years of age. This expansion added 26 million children and adolescents to groups recommended for routine influenza vaccination, which means greater protection for children and for the community at large. Influenza vaccines are now recommended for upwards of 250 million people.

The National Foundation for Infectious Diseases commissioned a survey recently to better assess mother's beliefs and practices concerning influenza and influenza vaccination, as well as to identify key vaccination barriers that exist. According to the survey, most parents believe influenza vaccines are safe and the majority believes vaccines are effective. Parents also recognize that influenza is a serious illness that can have a great affect on their children and, in fact, their entire families. However, while parents say they are more likely than in the past to seek influenza vaccine for their children, a significant number of parents say they will not seek vaccine for their kids even though they recognize the threat of infection. This is attributed to several misperceptions that were identified. This survey is part of NFID's focused efforts, supported by a group of 30 medical, public health and parent organizations, to make childhood influenza a national health priority and increase influenza immunization rates.

Key Findings

H1N1 has heightened mothers' concern over seasonal flu.

- Nearly half those polled (48 percent) say they are more concerned about seasonal flu than in the past.
- Those who are now more concerned are evenly split regarding reasons why:
 - 1/3 cite greater awareness of ease of transmission
 - 1/3 fear elevated risk for children
 - 1/3 cite greater awareness that flu can cause death in children

Mothers are now more inclined to have their children vaccinated for influenza.

- Over half indicate interest in vaccinating all of their children this year:
 - 53 percent for seasonal flu.
 - 55 percent for H1N1.
- Only 35 percent report that all or some of their children have been vaccinated annually for influenza in past years.

Parents recognize that influenza is serious, but do not think it is as serious as many other infectious diseases

- 63 percent say influenza is "extremely" or "very" serious; on par with chickenpox (62 percent).
- Parents clearly recognize that influenza is more serious than common cold (63 percent vs. 20 percent)
- But parents see influenza as less serious than other vaccine-preventable diseases like polio (rated "extremely or somewhat serious" by 91 percent; and measles rated "extremely" or "very" serious by 85 percent).

Influenza is viewed as a family health threat.

- Over ninety percent (91 percent) of mothers are concerned that the whole family would become ill if a child came down with seasonal flu.
- Three quarters said they were concerned about missed school; 70 percent were worried about missed work.
- Nearly three quarters (74 percent) said they would be concerned about their child feeling miserable and uncomfortable.

The majority of mothers believe seasonal influenza vaccines are safe, effective and important to remaining healthy.

- Seven in ten mothers rate the influenza vaccine safety as “excellent” or “good.”
- Over half surveyed (57 percent) say its effectiveness is “excellent” or “good.”
- Over two thirds (67 percent) say the vaccine is either “excellent or good” in terms of importance for keeping healthy.
- Only five percent say that “the vaccine causes the flu” is their main reason for not vaccinating.

Yet, a significant percentage of mothers still choose not to have their children vaccinated for flu this season.

- Nearly one third say they have no intention to vaccinate all of their children against flu this season:
 - 33 percent for seasonal flu.
 - 31 percent for H1N1.
- One in ten says vaccination decisions will vary among their children.
- Four percent remain undecided.

Barriers to vaccination include reliance on “magical” or “wishful” thinking (vs. proven scientific fact) and physicians placing decision in parents’ hands (in contrast to required vaccines).

- Nearly two thirds (63 percent) believe healthy children “did not need” to be vaccinated.
- Over half (57 percent) believe “Other ways to avoid influenza are just as effective.”
- Just over half (52 percent) say they don’t vaccinate because the pediatrician “left it up to them.”

Concerns about the vaccine are less commonly cited as reasons for not vaccinating.

- Only 11 percent cite “not sure the vaccine works” as their primary reason for not vaccinating.
- Seven percent say “not sure the vaccine is safe” is their primary reason for not vaccinating
- Only 5 percent say their primary reason for not vaccinating is “the vaccine can cause the flu”

About the Survey

The telephone survey of 500 mothers in the United States was conducted by Opinion Research Company August 19 – 25, 2009. The survey was sponsored by NFID as part of its efforts to focus on pediatric influenza. To qualify, respondents had to have children 6 months through 18 years of age living with them in their household. The survey was designed to examine mothers’ knowledge and attitudes about seasonal influenza and vaccination. The margin of error is 4.4 percent for the entire sample.

About NFID

The National Foundation for Infectious Diseases (NFID) is a non-profit, tax-exempt (501c3) organization founded in 1973 and dedicated to educating the public and health care professionals about the causes, treatment and prevention of infectious diseases. NFID established the *Childhood Influenza Immunization Coalition (CIIC)* in 2007 to help increase awareness and education about pediatric influenza and benefits of immunization. *Coalition* members include more than 30 of the nation's leading public health, medical, patient and parent groups. The *Coalition* is made possible through an unrestricted educational grant to NFID from sanofi pasteur.

More information can be found at www.PreventChildhoodInfluenza.org and www.nfid.org.