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*For Immediate Release*

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**NATION'S INFECTIOUS DISEASE AND DIABETES  
EXPERTS ISSUE COMPREHENSIVE REPORT ON NEED TO  
IMPROVE LOW INFLUENZA VACCINATION RATES  
AMONG PEOPLE WITH DIABETES**

*Fewer than half of all people with diabetes receive an influenza  
vaccination each year  
according to the National Foundation for Infectious Diseases*

BETHESDA, MD, August 28, 2007 — The National Foundation for Infectious Diseases (NFID) today issued a new report stressing the need for increased influenza vaccination rates among Americans with diabetes. The report was issued in response to alarmingly low influenza vaccination rates among persons with diabetes, despite recommendations from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the American Diabetes Association (ADA) and others.

“People with diabetes may have impaired immune systems that put them at higher risk of serious complications from influenza,” said William Schaffner, MD, NFID Vice President. “Influenza infection can interfere with blood sugar control, leading to low or high blood sugar and in some cases, even diabetic coma. Studies have shown influenza vaccination protects people with diabetes. All health care professionals who serve patients with diabetes need to step up their efforts to assure that every patient with diabetes is protected against influenza.”

Nearly twenty of the nation's leading medical and public health groups have joined NFID's national initiative to provide health care professionals with practical strategies and tools to help increase low influenza immunization rates among people with diabetes. The new resources are now available via NFID's Web site, [www.nfid.org](http://www.nfid.org).

Influenza is a serious and potentially deadly respiratory infection that spreads from person to person and infects up to 60 million Americans annually. The virus is responsible for more than 200,000 hospitalizations and an average of 36,000 deaths in this country each year. Influenza kills more Americans each year than all other vaccine-preventable diseases combined. It is the fifth deadliest disease in the U.S.

Today's estimates from the CDC and the ADA indicate nearly 21 million people have diabetes, with another 54 million estimated to have impaired fasting glucose (pre-diabetes).

More than 50 percent of those with diabetes (or at least 10 million people) lack protection from annual influenza vaccination, despite longstanding recommendations from the CDC and ADA. In addition, over 10 percent of deaths related to influenza and pneumonia are attributable to diabetes

Studies have proved the effectiveness of influenza vaccine in persons with diabetes. In one study, vaccination reduced hospitalization and death by 72 percent in people with diabetes 18 to 64 years of age. Another study associated vaccination with a nearly 80 percent reduction in hospital admissions in children and adults with diabetes.

In addition to vaccinating persons with diabetes, it is also important for their close contacts, such as family members, close friends and co-workers, to be vaccinated. Close contacts can easily transmit influenza to those around them if they become ill.

"People don't realize how easily influenza can pass from one person to another in social, family and work environments," said NFID Medical Director Susan J. Rehm, MD. "Getting an influenza vaccination every year ensures we protect ourselves and those around us, especially those more vulnerable like people with diabetes."

### **NFID's Influenza and People with Diabetes Initiative**

NFID's ongoing initiative is designed to help health care providers overcome influenza immunization barriers in this population and reinforce a comprehensive approach toward improving influenza vaccination rates among patients with diabetes. The program aims to highlight the severe complications influenza infection can cause, as well as reinforce the

importance of annual influenza immunization. More information about the initiative can be found at [www.nfid.org](http://www.nfid.org).

The recently published monograph, “Improving Influenza Vaccination Rates in Adults and Children with Diabetes: Identifying and Overcoming Immunization Barriers in this High-risk Population,” provides a comprehensive overview of influenza and diabetes rates in the U.S., as well as clinical interventions, strategies and case studies for boosting vaccine uptake.

The following organizations support the goals of NFID’s initiative: the American Academy of Family Physicians, American Academy of Pediatrics, American Academy of Physician Assistants, American Association of Diabetes Educators, American College of Physicians, American Diabetes Association, American Medical Association, American Nurses Association, American Pharmacists Association, Asian/Pacific Islander Health Forum, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Cincinnati Children’s Hospital, Kaiser Permanente of Northern California, National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners, National Diabetes Education Program, National Medical Association, Society for Adolescent Medicine and Visiting Nurse Associations of America.

### **About the National Foundation for Infectious Diseases**

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 healthcare professionals about the causes, treatment and prevention of infectious diseases. This initiative was made possible through an unrestricted educational grant to NFID from sanofi pasteur.

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