



SOCIAL SERVICES CORNER DECEMBER 2007

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ISSUE 12 ARTICLES:

- ASK THE SOCIAL WORKER: WHO NEEDS A FLU SHOT?
- GAMBLING AND OLDER ADULTS
- HOME SAFETY
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ASK THE SOCIAL WORKER

Q: *Is the flu shot the best way to protect me from the flu? And who needs to get a flu shot every year?*

A: The single best way to protect yourself from the flu is to get the flu shot each year. The flu shot is an inactivated vaccine that is generally given with a needle and contains three influenza viruses. These three strains are representative of the influenza vaccine strains recommended for that year.

Who should get the flu shot? Those at high risk for influenza-related complications and severe disease, including:

- Children 6 months to 5 years old.
- Adults 50 and older.
- People at any age with certain chronic medical conditions.
- People who live in nursing homes and long-term care facilities.
- Pregnant women.
- Those who live with or care for people at high risk.

Those who **should not** get the flu shot are people who have had a severe allergic reaction to eggs or to a previous flu shot or a history of Guillain-Barre Syndrome (GBS). You may want to reschedule your flu shot if you are sick with a fever, or at least talk to your doctor or nurse beforehand.

The best prevention from the flu is to get vaccinated, but the following good health habits may also help:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick and stay home if you are ill.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing.
- Clean your hands and avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
- Being physically active, getting plenty of sleep, managing stress, drinking plenty of fluids and eating nutritious foods are also important.

For more information on the flu shot and influenza, go to www.cdc.gov or call **(800) cdc-info**. To find a local clinic in your local area to get a flu shot, go to www.findaflushot.com.

Questions or
comments call
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GAMBLING AND OLDER ADULTS

With a growing number of riverboat and Indian casinos, lotteries and Internet gambling sites, gambling is on the rise in older adults. While providing older adults with recreational and social activities, the wider access to gambling is also creating financial difficulties. This is especially devastating to older adults who are dependent on fixed incomes without the access to sources of income that they had when they were younger. Gambling is not just a financial problem, it is an emotional problem that creates financial consequences. Problem gambling, according to the National Council on Problem Gambling, occurs when behavior patterns associated with gambling compromise, disrupt or damage personal, family or vocational pursuits. The increasing pre-occupation with gambling, a need to bet more money more frequently, restlessness or irritability when attempting to stop, and the continuation of gambling despite negative consequences are all signs of problem gambling. For more information on how to recognize and treat problem gambling, contact:

- National Council on Problem Gambling: www.ncpgambling.org or call (800) 522-4700
- Gamblers Anonymous: www.gamblersanonymous.org or call (213) 386-8789
- Institute for Problem Gambling: www.gamblingproblem.org or call (860) 343-5500, ext. 2125

HOME SAFETY

Do you ever feel that it used to be safer to move around in your home? There are many techniques, home modifications, and assistive devices that can make your home a safer place to live. Safety solutions can be as simple as painting walls to contrast with the floors, adding handrails and extra lighting to help negotiate stairs, and using bathmats to prevent unnecessary falls.

The American Association of Retired Persons, www.aarp.org or (888) 687-2277, has current articles regarding home safety. Click on 'family, home, legal,' then, on the left side of the screen, 'home design,' to view many safety ideas. Click on the 'certified aging in place specialists' link to learn more about making safer housing choices and locating a certified aging in place specialist (CAPS) in your state. Rebuilding Together, www.rebuildingtogether.org or (800) 473-4229, provides free volunteer services to repair and improve the safety of homes of individuals with the greatest financial and safety needs. Active Forever, www.activeforever.com or 800-377-8033, also offers assistive devices.

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"I admire any man that can rise above his surroundings."

— Will Rogers

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