

Mayor: Get your flu shots

■ **Giuliani urges
all New Yorkers
to get vaccinated
to reduce anthrax-
related confusion**

By REGINALD PATRICK
ADVANCE CITY HALL BUREAU

In its early stages, inhalation anthrax, an often fatal disorder, mimics the flu.

To reduce the potential for medical confusion as this city contends with the growing bioterrorism threat, city officials are urging New Yorkers to get flu shots.

"The flu presents the possibility of creating a lot of confusion in looking for an anthrax case," said Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani. "It's good for you to get a flu shot and it's really good for the city."

"You'll help reduce the needle-in-a-haystack situation in trying to figure out what these symptoms are all about."

At a midday press conference at City Hall, the mayor, joined by Health Commissioner Dr. Neal Cohen and Department for the Aging Commissioner Herbert Stupp,

rolled up his sleeve and got a shot himself to show New Yorkers the procedure is painless. "It doesn't hurt, it doesn't hurt," a smiling Giuliani repeated to himself as a nurse stuck the needle into his left arm.

In cooperation with Department for the Aging and the Visiting Nurse Service of New York, the city Health Department is offering free immunizations at walk-in clinics and senior citizens centers through mid-December.

Right now the Health and Hospitals Corp. is giving shots at city hospitals and at Communicare clinic sites.

On Staten Island, free shots are available at the Richmond District Health Center, 51 Stuyvesant Pl., St. George, on Mondays from 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. for those without health insurance.

Noting that the elderly make up a high-risk group, Stupp said two-thirds of the city's 340 senior citizens centers are providing free shots.

Nikki Wright, vice president for community programs with the Staten Island Community Agency for Senior Citizens (CASC), said

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"thousands of seniors in this borough" stand to benefit from this program.

Staten Island senior citizen centers scheduled to offer the free shots include:

■ Berry Houses Friendship Club, 211 Jefferson St., Nov. 27.

■ Cassidy-Coles Senior Center, 125 Cassidy Pl., Nov. 7.

■ West Brighton Senior Center, 230 Broadway, Nov. 14.

■ South Beach Senior Center, 126 Lamport Blvd., Nov. 7.

■ Our Lady of Pity Golden Age Center, 1616 Richmond Ave., Nov. 20.

■ New Dorp Beach Friendship Club, 128 Cedar Grove Ave., Nov. 26.

City officials said pneumonia vaccine shots are also available at the centers. While flu shots should be taken annually, the Health Department says that if an initial pneumonia shot is taken at age 65 or older, no further shots are required.

If the initial shot is taken before the age of 65, it is recommended that shots be repeated every five years thereafter.

Seniors are not the only New Yorkers at risk of catching the flu. Also falling into the high risk group are nursing-home and chronic-care facility residents; persons with heart, circulatory, lung or kidney problems; people with compromised immune systems; pregnant women in the second or third trimester, and children between the ages of 6 months and 18 years who are on long-term aspirin therapy.

New Yorkers seeking information on the flu can call the city's toll-free flu information line at 1-866-FLU LINE (1-866-358-5463) or visit the Health Department's Web site at nyc.gov/health.

So far there have been a dozen confirmed cases of anthrax nationwide, including at least four in New York City.

The city's cases have involved the skin form of the disease. Two postal workers have died in Washington, D.C., and two others are suffering from the much more serious inhalation form of anthrax.

Public health officials have opted to treat thousands of postal workers who may have come in contact with letters tainted with the bacteria. The workers are being given the antibiotic Cipro.



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Mayor Rudolph Giuliani grimaces as he gets a flu shot from nurse Sarah Townley, as Police Commissioner Bernard Kerik looks on at City Hall.

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