

CVS Caremark to give away up to \$5M in flu shots

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(AP) -- CVS Caremark Corp. said Wednesday it will give away up to \$5 million in seasonal flu vaccinations to people without health insurance.

The Woonsocket, R.I., company said vouchers for the vaccines will be available at clinics or community health centers starting Sept. 20. Consumers will be able to redeem the vouchers at any of CVS' 7,100 locations and its retail MinuteClinics. The names of the participating clinics will be announced Sept. 20.

CVS said it is working with Direct Relief USA, a nonprofit organization, to give out the shots.

The vaccine provides immunizations for the 2009 strain of [swine flu](#), along with influenza B and H3N2 flu. CVS sells the vaccine for \$29.95 per shot at pharmacies and clinics. CVS said most of the shots will be provided by [Novartis](#) AG, with the rest coming from Sanofi-Aventis AS's Vaxserve unit.

CVS, Walgreen Co. and Rite Aid Corp. each started selling flu shots in mid-August, which is significantly earlier than in past years. Last year the companies started administering the shots around Sept. 1, and in previous years the drugstores usually started offering the vaccinations around Oct. 1.

Walgreen also plans to give away vouchers for up to \$1 million in free flu shots this year. The shots retail for \$29.99 at its stores.

Last year, CVS gave away 100,000 seasonal flu shots, or about \$3 million worth, the company said.

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