

# Public Health Views... and News

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## **INFLUENZA VACCINATION 2003-2004 NEW OPPORTUNITIES**

**James Phillips, M.D.,  
Medical Director**

Influenza has long been known to lead to increased death and serious illness in elderly adults and for all persons with risk factors such as asthma, diabetes, and immune suppression. A recent CDC analysis has shown a dramatic increase in influenza associated deaths over previous estimates by about 2 ½ times (51,203/yr vs. prior estimate of 20,000/yr). Epidemiological evidence has shown significant morbidity in infants and young children from influenza. Hospitalization of children with respiratory problems peaks during the flu season. There was a significant peak in the 2002 epidemic year.

The ACIP recommends influenza vaccination for all children 6-23 months and for all household contacts and out-of-home caretakers of children under 2 years. This year the Vaccines for Children (VFC) program has expanded to cover VFC-eligible children in these groups beginning in October 2003. Immunization is recommended for all people over age 50, all nursing home residents, physicians, nurses and other caretakers of people at risk, and pregnant women past the 3<sup>rd</sup> month of pregnancy during the flu season. The vaccine is also encouraged for **anyone** who wants to reduce his or her chance of catching influenza. The FDA has approved a new nasally administered vaccine for **healthy** children and adults aged 5 to 49 years. FluMist® is a tri-valent live attenuated cold-adapted influenza vaccine (CAIV-T). It is active against the same strains as in the standard

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injectable form. It is not to be used in high-risk individuals such as asthmatics or diabetics. It is 92% efficacious at preventing culture-confirmed influenza. Children aged 5 – 8 should receive two doses of CAIV-T separated by 60 days, and persons who are 9 to 49 years should receive one dose of CAIV-T. One dose consists of one spray of 0.25 ml in each nostril (0.50 ml total). The vaccine is more costly at present than the injectable form but nevertheless is an excellent choice because of the ease of administration to children and because of its increased efficacy. It will not be available through the VFC program as of this publication. The dose of the intramuscular vaccine for children is 0.25 ml, split virus vaccine, IM for children 6 months to 3 years of age; 0.5 ml, split virus vaccine, IM for children 3 years – 8 years of age. For those children age 6 months to 8 years of age receiving the vaccine **for the first time** should receive two doses at least 1 month apart. Persons over 9 years of age need only receive one dose/year of 0.5 ml, split virus vaccine, IM.

For the latest bulletin from the National Immunization Program (July 22, 2003), log onto the web at:

[www.cdc.gov/nip/Flu/bulletins-flu/2003-04/FluBulletin2\\_072203.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/nip/Flu/bulletins-flu/2003-04/FluBulletin2_072203.pdf)

Additionally, there are downloadable materials for providers, including vaccine information statements and flyers at the following link;

<http://www.cdc.gov/nip/Flu>

### **Free arsenic testing program.**



The Michigan Department of Environmental Quality and Community Health and the Branch Hillsdale St.

Joseph Community Health Agency have teamed up to conduct free testing for arsenic, to provide educational materials to well owners, and to suggest ways to reduce arsenic levels. Free test kits are available in Hillsdale, Coldwater and Three Rivers through the Environmental Health division. The only cost to residents is about \$3 in postage to mail the sample to the laboratory.

In October 2001, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency lowered the arsenic drinking water standard from 50 micrograms per liter to 10 micrograms per liter. Water well testing results indicate that 48 counties may have groundwater that exceeds the U.S EPA's new health guideline. Arsenic occurs naturally in rocks, soil, air, plants, animals and drinking water. Long term exposure to arsenic has been linked to

stomach problems, fatigue, cancer, heart disease, and other health problems. Children, seniors and people with continuing medical illnesses are at particular risk. To qualify for a free test kit, a person must be a resident of the county or local health department jurisdiction (Branch, Hillsdale, or St. Joseph counties), and live in a residence served by its own water well.

For more information on the free arsenic testing program you can call 800-MI-TOXIC, the DEQ at 517-241-1381, or you can contact the Branch Hillsdale St. Joseph Health Agency Environmental Health offices at the following numbers:

Hillsdale	437-7395
Branch	279-9561
St. Joseph	273-2161

This program will be available to the public through September of 2003.

### **Teen parents in Hillsdale to get extra help**

The Community Health Agency is proud to announce that the Healthy Beginnings Program of Hillsdale County (a collaborative project involving the Health Agency, Community Action Agency, Hillsdale ISD, Early On of Michigan, Family Independence Agency, Hillsdale Community Health



Center and the Human Services Network) will be expanding their services in October of 2003. Their will be a new component focusing on pregnant teens and teen parents.

Healthy Beginnings currently serves Hillsdale families with children newborn to 3 years old. Trained parent educators provide home visits to families, providing child development information and parent-child activities to promote healthy growth and development. Additionally, the program offers weekly play groups to provide families opportunities to play and learn with their children. Parent group meetings and parenting classes are offered as well.

Healthy Beginnings will be expanding this community project by recruiting new community partners, including the local OB/GYN offices, Hillsdale Community Schools, as well as the Alternative schools, to identify pregnant teens and teen parents to refer to the program. The Community Health Agency has received a grant from the Children's Trust Fund in the amount of \$30,000 to assist in this new effort. Healthy Beginnings is looking forward to working with these new partners in an attempt to bring teen parents this much needed service in our community. This new funding runs through September of 2006.

### Technology update –Hearing and Vision

Generous grants from three area Community Foundations have made it possible for the Community Health Agency Hearing and Vision School Screening Program to



purchase three laptops for the Michigan

Department of Community Health (MDCH) comprehensively trained technicians to use when screening in the schools. The technicians will train to use a software program developed by Washtenaw County Health Department for recording data and processing the follow-up paperwork related to screening. This system is expected to save the technicians about 1-1/2 days of time a week. It will also be easier to track students that move to other schools within the tri-county area. Time saved will free up time to assist in screening of the 0-5 aged population in collaboration with other programs in the community targeting this age group. MDCH is focusing increased attention on early intervention through earlier screenings. Through funding available from the Department of Education and training in each county through Early On, equipment will soon be readily available for screening children aged 0-5.

Early intervention not only enhances learning, it is less costly and more effective in preventing long term damage. It is hoped that parents will consider this free screening and the referrals to medical care for further evaluation and treatment as they would a routine check up at the dentist's office.

## KIDSFEST

The Community Health Agency and the Branch County SAFE KIDS Chapter will sponsor a child safety seat check-up on August 23, 2003 from 10am to 2pm at the Legg Middle School in Coldwater as part of Kidsfest 2003. The Agency will also have a display on Agency services providing the community with information and education on various health and safety topics. The main focus will be on Women, Infant and Children (WIC), the supplemental nutrition program, and on immunizations. The Community Health Agency along with its community partners (Branch County ISD, Family Success by Six, WTVB the voice of Branch County, Cole Story Ford Lincoln Mercury, and Coldwater Community Schools) are looking forward to another successful family fun day at Kidsfest 2003.

## AAA Happenings

With the growing older adult population, more and more families are taking care of older spouses, parents or other loved ones. Many individuals seeking your services may be finding themselves in this demanding, stressful and often frustrating role of being a caregiver.



Many caregivers are not aware there are services and resources

available in their community to help them take care of their older loved one. The Branch-St. Joseph Area Agency on Aging (IIC) would like to introduce Michigan Generations, a magazine for caregivers.

Michigan Generations, a quarterly publication of the Michigan Area Agencies on Aging, is full of information for the caregiver including a feature article; ask the expert column, local services, and a care-giving news and notes section. The magazine will be mailed to select public health partners and agencies, at no cost, every 3 months. If you would like additional information, copies of the magazine, or would like to have your name removed from the mailing list, please contact Laura Sutter at (517) 279-9561 extension 137. We hope you will find it to be a

valuable resource for your clients.

### Other senior stuff:

Studies show that 30 minutes of moderate physical exercise three or more days a week can reduce arthritis pain and help you move more easily. So take a walk. Go dancing. Ride a bike. Go for a swim. Make it fun by inviting friends or family to join you. If 30 minutes is too much, try 10 or 15 minutes at a time. Stick with it and in four to six weeks you could hurt less and feel more energetic. Physical activity can be the arthritis pain reliever.

To learn more call 1-800-968-3030. You can also log onto our web site at [www.bhsj.org](http://www.bhsj.org) and click on the "Physical Activity" article in the What's New in Our Area" section of our home page.

### Tinkering with the Agency Web site.

There have been some changes going on at the Community Health Agency web site for those of you who have visited us on the web ([www.bhsj.org](http://www.bhsj.org)). As most frequent web users know, web



sites frequently change to reflect new technology, to allow easier use by the

browsing public, or just because they were unhappy with their original design. The Health Agency's web site is currently under construction for all of those reasons stated. Our new format (changing daily, so keep up) emphasizes first and foremost what health Issues and events are important in and around our tri-county area. There will also be articles and links pertaining to State and National health issues. You can now access our monthly schedule of services provided through the clinic. As before, if you are a contractor or homeowner, Environmental Health forms are available for download. Check out new information this month on a Methamphetamine workshop in Hillsdale, or physical activity and its relationship to arthritis reduction, or lyme disease and its influx into our state and local community.

Additionally we have beefed up our links section, adding more local, State and National sites of interest, including a link to the U.S. Census Factfinder service, for persons looking for detailed Census information about their community.

Add [www.bhsj.org](http://www.bhsj.org) to the "favorites" in your browser to keep current on what is happening in Public Health in Branch, Hillsdale and St. Joseph Counties.