

For Immediate Release: The Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency

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Community Health Agency orders more vaccine - State lifts eminent danger order

On October 14, 2004 the State Health Department (MDCH) issued an Eminent Danger Order restricting the use of influenza vaccine to designated high risk target populations only. As of December 9, 2004 that order has been lifted. The MDCH issued the order in October to assure that Michigan's highest risk citizens would receive first priority in receiving a flu vaccine this year. Michigan will receive approximately 1.9 million doses of vaccine this year. Health departments and local healthcare providers have been working with the State for the past 2 months to assure that persons in the high risk categories spelled out by the CDC have been able to get a vaccine. During this time, the Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency gave 4,000 flu shots, an increase of nearly 1,500 over last year. Citizens were extremely patient and understanding of the situation, that seemed to change daily in October and November. As a result, the Health Agency was able to offer a flu shot to everyone who met this years restricted guidelines and who were on our waiting list in October.

With the focus now shifting to persons who would have received a vaccine in 'typical' flu season, the Community Health Agency is convinced there are many persons who would have requested a flu shot, but stepped aside so that others could go first. This list includes persons aged 50-64, persons living with a family member who suffers from a chronic disease (heart disease, asthma, cancer, diabetes, and others), teachers, police, and fire fighters are now eligible to receive a flu vaccine under the new Michigan guidelines. With these new protocols in place, the Community Health Agency has ordered an additional 820 doses of flu vaccine for the tri-county area. These will be distributed to our 4 local offices in Sturgis, Three Rivers, Hillsdale and Coldwater based on requests received in each of those communities. Citizens should call the office closest to them to make an appointment. Please be aware, this vaccine has been **ordered but not yet received**. When the shipment is received, we will be contacting persons who have requested an appointment. Remember, the flu season runs from October through March and often into April. The Community Health Agency is attempting to make every effort to assure that all citizens in our tri-county area who want to get vaccinated have access to that service. When vaccine is received by the Health Agency, we will contact those who have requested an appointment.

Local Health Department office phone numbers are listed below.

Coldwater 279-9561 x 141

Hillsdale 437-7395 x 119

Sturgis 659-4013 x 121

Three Rivers 273-2161 x 208

For additional information about the flu, flu activity in our area, precautions you can take, and other useful information, please visit our web site at:

WWW.BHSJ.ORG and take the "Following the Flu" link