

February 4, 2011

Contact: Jo Ann Wilczynski, 517-279-9561, ext. 143
Theresa Christner, 517-279-9561, ext. 144

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

It's Not too Late to Vaccinate – Stop the Flu Before It Stops You!

(Coldwater, MI) With talk of flu on the rise, you might think “it’s too late to get the flu shot.” But it’s not. The Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency wants to remind you that it’s not too late to vaccinate!

According to the CDC, flu in Michigan is at a regionalized level. This means that outbreaks of influenza or increases in influenza-like-illnesses and recent laboratory confirmed Influenza have been reported in at least two of the state’s four regions. While the number of outpatient office visits for influenza-like illnesses has increased, the number of confirmed lab reports for influenza still ranges from five to eight in each of the three counties. “Flu season typically peaks in January and February but can occur as late as May,” says Jo Ann Wilczynski, Prevention Services Director, Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency. “We are encouraging people who have not yet been vaccinated to get vaccinated now. Everyone over the age of six months should be vaccinated.”

By getting your flu shot, you can minimize your chances of coming down with the flu and spreading it to those around you. The flu shot provides protection in just two weeks and that protection lasts for an entire year. This year’s vaccine protects against influenza A/H3N2 and influenza B and A/H1N1 influenza, the strain associated with last year’s pandemic.

The Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency is offering **Free Flu Shot Clinics** on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday at the following local offices, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Appointments are preferred, but walk-ins are accepted.

Branch County Office

**570 N. Marshall Rd 517-279-9561
Coldwater, MI**

St. Joseph County Office

**1110 Hill Street
Three Rivers, MI**

269-273-2161

Hillsdale County Office

**20 Care Drive
Hillsdale, MI**

517-437-7395

For millions of people each year, the flu can bring a fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, muscle aches, fatigue, and miserable days spent in bed instead of at work or school. However, you may not realize that more than 200,000 people are hospitalized from flu complications each year. The flu can also be deadly. Between 1976 and 2007, CDC estimates that annual flu-associated deaths in the United States have ranged from a low of about 3,000 people to a high of about 49,000 people.

Anyone can get the flu, but some people are at greater risk for serious flu-related complications, like pneumonia, that can lead to hospitalization and even death. For those at greater risk for complications, getting the flu vaccine is especially important. People at greater risk include:

- Children younger than 5 years old, but especially children younger than 2 years old
- Pregnant women
- People with certain medical conditions like asthma, diabetes (type 1 and 2), or heart and lung disease
- People 65 years and older

It's also important to get the vaccine if you care for anyone in one or more of these high risk groups, or for babies younger than 6 months because they are too young to get the vaccine. Many children need two doses of flu vaccine to be fully protected. If a child has not received his/her first dose, get them vaccinated now. For those who have been vaccinated with one dose, parents should check with their child's doctor to see if a second dose is needed.

"Getting the flu vaccine is simple, and it's the most important thing you can do to protect yourself and your family from the flu," says Steve Todd, Health Officer. For

more information about influenza or the flu vaccine, contact the Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency and visit the agency's website at <http://www.bhsj.org>. Remember – Stop the flu, before it stops you!

###