

**Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Don't Delay! ....Get Your FREE FLU SHOTS Right Away!**

**(Coldwater, MI)** The Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency wants to remind you that it's not too late to vaccinate! And to encourage you to take a poke, the health department is offering flu shots for free!

Steve Todd, Health Officer of the tri-county health department states "We have received numerous requests to continue the free program we offered last year. So in October, when the Michigan Department of Community Health announced they had free flu vaccine, we placed our order. We understand that many people want to be immunized but simply cannot afford it."

Jo Ann Wilczynski, Prevention Services Director, Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency states "Flu season typically peaks in January and February. So we are encouraging people who have not yet been vaccinated to get vaccinated now. Everyone over the age of six months should be immunized. And now that it's free – there is no reason to delay!" Already, the Michigan Department of Community Health has reported two confirmed cases of influenza this year.

By getting your free flu shot, you can minimize your chances of catching 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.

The Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency is offering **free flu shots** at its local offices. Appointments are preferred, but walk-ins are accepted. Contact your local office to schedule a time to get your shot:

**Branch County Office**

**570 N. Marshall Rd 517-279-9561, ext. 200  
Coldwater, MI**

**St. Joseph County Office**

**1110 Hill Street 269-273-2161, ext. 200  
Three Rivers, MI**

**Hillsdale County Office**

**20 Care Drive  
Hillsdale, MI**

**517-437-7395, ext. 200**

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.

During a busy holiday season, you might be reluctant to add one more thing to your to-do list. But it's worth it. "Getting the flu vaccine is one way to ensure you have a healthy holiday season," says Steve Todd, Health Officer.

For more information about influenza or the **free flu vaccine**, contact the Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency and visit the agency's website at <http://www.bhsj.org>. Remember – Flu Season is Here – Don't Delay – Get Your **FREE Flu Shot** Right Away!

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