

Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Be Flu Safe!

Coldwater, MI. Flu activity is already starting to be reported in certain states for the 2013/2014 influenza season. The Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency wants to remind you to be **flu safe** this season by getting your flu immunization now!

According to Steve Todd, Health Officer for the tri-county health department, “Each year, vaccines are developed to protect people from the types of flu viruses that are forecasted to be the most likely circulating during the season. This year, you have more immunization options than ever before. Vaccinations can be delivered through shots or nasal sprays. There are also options related to the number of flu strains from which you can be protected – either three or four.”

To help you make an informed choice, the health department has outlined your options:

Trivalent Vaccines:

Trivalent vaccines protect people from two influenza A strains and one influenza B strain:

- an A/California/7/2009 (H1N1)pdm09-like virus;
- an A(H3N2) virus antigenically like the cell-propagated prototype virus A/Victoria/361/2011;
- a B/Massachusetts/2/2012-like virus.

The following trivalent flu vaccines are available:

- Standard dose trivalent vaccines that are manufactured using virus grown in eggs or virus grown in cell culture;

- Standard dose trivalent vaccine that is egg-free, which is approved for people 18 through 49 years of age;
- High-dose trivalent vaccine that was developed to give people 65 years and older a better immune response, and therefore, better protection against flu; and
- .A standard dose intradermal trivalent shot, which is injected into the skin instead of the muscle and uses a much smaller needle than the regular flu shot. This has been approved for people 18 through 64 years of age.

Quadrivalent Flu Vaccines:

Quadrivalent vaccines protect people from two influenza A strains and two influenza B strains:

- an A/California/7/2009 (H1N1)pdm09-like virus;
- an A(H3N2) virus antigenically like the cell-propagated prototype virus A/Victoria/361/2011;
- a B/Massachusetts/2/2012-like virus;
- a B/Brisbane/60/2008-like virus.

The following quadrivalent flu vaccines are available:

- Standard dose quadrivalent shot
- Standard dose quadrivalent flu vaccine, given as a nasal spray, approved for healthy people 2 through 49 years of age.

Steve Todd, Health Officer, goes on to say “While consumers have many options in regards to type of vaccine and the ways it is administered, their best choice is simply to get immunized! Immunization continues to be the single best protection against the flu and everyone – from 6 months of age on up needs this protection!”

The district health department offers flu shots to the public. Appointments are preferred but walk-ins are accepted. The health department is currently stocking both trivalent and quadrivalent vaccines. We accept the following insurances: Medicare Part B, Medicaid, Blue Cross/Blue Shield, Priority Health and Railroad Carriers. We also provide flu immunizations free of charge for children up through 18 years who are on Medicaid, are uninsured or who do not have immunization insurance coverage (underinsured) through our Vaccine for Children program. For all others, the cost is \$30.00. To schedule a flu immunization appointment, contact one of our county offices in Coldwater, Hillsdale or Three Rivers by calling:

Branch County

517-279-9561

Hillsdale County

517-437-7395

St. Joseph County

269-273-2161

Seasonal flu is a viral infection. It causes fever, chills, sore throat, muscle aches, cough, headache and a runny or stuffy nose. For most people, flu symptoms last only a few days, but for young children, people 65 years and older and people with certain chronic health conditions – they can get much sicker and suffer its complications.

Because flu can occur at any time, it's important to get immunized soon. It takes up to two weeks for protection to develop – but after that – the protection lasts up to a year. Remember: Each year, thousands of people are hospitalized and/or die on account of complications due to seasonal flu. Don't be one of them. It's better to be **flu safe** than sorry!

To learn more about seasonal flu, signs and symptoms or about our immunization program, just visit our website at www.bhsj.org.

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