

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

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Third Death Related to Flu Occurs – How to Keep the Bug Out**

**Coldwater, MI.** The Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency is reporting the third death in the tri-county area due to complications from influenza. This is the second death in St. Joseph County. The death occurred in an elderly man in an out-county facility. In each of the three cases, there were underlying conditions that may have been the root of the problem, and it is unknown if any of the three people had received a flu shot this season. “Some years, we see the peak of the flu season hit in March and April. While we have seen some decreases in flu reports, we are not out of the woods yet” states Health Officer Steve Todd. He adds “These deaths serve to remind us of the importance of vaccination. Getting your flu shot is the single most effective way to prevent the flu from coming into your household and infecting you and your family.”

In addition to the flu shot, here are some healthy living habits that can help stop the spread of germs.

- 1. Avoid close contact.** When you are sick, stay away from others to prevent spreading your germs. If this means staying home from work, school, church and running errands, so be it. Likewise, when others are sick, try to keep your distance.
- 2. Cover your cough.** If you have access to tissues, always cover your cough and sneezes with a tissue. If you do not, try to cover it with your elbow instead of

coughing and sneezing directly into your hands, which are more apt to touch door knobs and other people.

3. **Wash your hands.** Especially after coughing, sneezing and blowing your nose. Wash your hands with warm water and soap frequently. If soap and water aren't available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
4. **Know the difference between cleaning, disinfecting and sanitizing, and do all three often.** Cleaning removes germs, dirt and impurities from surface areas. It does not necessarily kill the germs, but it helps stop the spread of them by removing them. Disinfecting kills the germs on surface areas and objects, and sanitizing lowers the number of germs to a safe level by cleaning or disinfecting those surface areas and objects that may have been exposed to germs. Be sure that you are cleaning, disinfecting and sanitizing on a regular schedule. Wipe down door knobs, counter tops, keyboards, electronics, toys, or other items you come in close contact with often. Linens that have been used by a sick person do not need to be washed separately, but they must be washed and dried thoroughly before someone else uses them. Also, clean your toothbrush or replace it after a bout of illness to avoid recontamination.
5. **Practice all-around healthy habits.** Make sure that you are getting plenty of rest, drinking fluids throughout the day and managing your stress. By eating healthy and staying active you can strengthen your immune system to help keep you from getting sick and this will make fighting the symptoms an easier for your body.

For more information about getting your flu shot and the best ways to fight off the flu bug, visit our website at [www.bhsj.org](http://www.bhsj.org) and call or stop into any of our three local offices.

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