

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

**October 1, 2015**

**Steve Todd, Health Officer**  
517-279-9561, ext. 0148#  
**Kim Wilhelm,**  
**Prevention Services Director**  
517-279-9561, ext. 0143#

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

#### **Achoo! Could it be the Flu?**

**Coldwater, MI.** The Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency is encouraging all tri-county residents to protect themselves by getting flu shots. Steve Todd, Health Officer for the tri-county health department states “The availability and affordability of the vaccine make it easier than ever to protect yourself and your family.”

Kim Wilhelm, Prevention Services Director adds “We are encouraging everyone over the age of 6 months to get the flu shot, but especially school-age children. Reducing the spread of the virus is especially crucial in our schools. Children who receive a flu shot are helping to create healthier classrooms and prevent missed sick days.” The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends a flu shot or nasal vaccine spray for all individuals 6 months of age and older. Children between the ages of 6 months to 8 years may require two doses of flu vaccine that are given at least 4 weeks apart.

If your child is 18 years or younger, uninsured, lacks immunization coverage as part of their health insurance policy or are covered by Healthy Michigan or some other form of Medicaid, he/she may be eligible to receive their shot free of charge through the Vaccine for Children Program. According to Kim Wilhelm “Now more than ever, getting a flu shot is both easy and affordable. Call the health department to find out more and to schedule your appointment.”

Manufacturers have begun shipping flu vaccines for the 2015-2016 flu season, and many local pharmacies are already administering the vaccination. People who should especially receive the flu vaccine, because they may be at higher risk for complications or negative consequences, include:

- Children age 6 months through 4 years;
- Pregnant women;

- People 50 years old or older;
- People age 6 months and older with chronic health problems;
- People who live in nursing homes and other long-term care facilities;
- Health care workers, and;
- Household contacts and caregivers of, or people who live with, a person at high risk for complications from the flu;
- Out-of-home caregivers of children less than 6 months old.

The timing and duration of flu season varies, but can begin as early as October and last as late as May. It takes about two weeks for immunity to develop and offer protection against flu after receiving a vaccine. Vaccination can be given any time during the flu season. Infection with the flu virus can cause fever, headache, cough, sore throat, runny nose, sneezing and body aches.

The health department is offering quadrivalent vaccine this year which provides protection against the most prevalent Influenza A strain, the two most prevalent Influenza B strains and H1N1 vaccines which are predicted to be circulating this year. In addition to providing vaccinations at the local county offices, the health department will be holding two special off-site clinics at the following community events:

<b>October 13th, 9 a.m. to noon</b>	<b>Older American’s Health Fair, Dearth Center</b>	<b>Coldwater, MI</b>
<b>October 16th, 9 a.m. to noon</b>	<b>Hillsdale County Health Fair, Perennial Park</b>	<b>Hillsdale, MI</b>

The costs of the shots are as follows:

- **Flu Shot** (*recommended for those between the ages of 6 months and 64 years*) - **\$40.00**
- **High Dose** (*which provides extra antigen and is available for those 65 years and older*) - **\$55.00**
- **Flu Mist** (*which provides flu vaccine through a mist, versus a shot and is available for those 2 years through 49 years*) - **\$53.00**

To schedule your appointment for either of these events, please call your local office and follow the prompts.

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 Three Rivers, MI 49093  
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