

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

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

#### **Flu Immunization Events Coming Soon to a Community Near You!**

**Coldwater, MI.** When it comes to staying out of the hospital, a new study released by the CDC indicates that, for people 50 years and older, getting a flu shot decreases their risk of being hospitalized for flu-associated illnesses by half. “Getting your annual flu shot is an important way you can maintain your good health, especially if you are 50 years and older” says Rebecca Burns, Health Officer for the Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency. “To make getting vaccinations more convenient - during October - the health department is offering flu and pneumonia shots at two special community events. Who knew getting an immunization could be so easy and fun?”

On October 11th, health department nurses and staff will be providing flu and pneumonia shots at the **2016 Older American Health Fair** from 9 a.m. to noon at the Dearth Center, in Coldwater. Staff will have plenty of high dose vaccine on hand. High dose vaccine has been shown to be more effective in preventing flu in adults 65 years and older than the standard dose vaccine. In addition to flu and pneumonia vaccinations, participating seniors can receive free blood pressure and vision screenings; benefit from talking one on one with a pharmacist; and register for various door prizes.

On October 21st, the health department nurses and staff are offering a second off-site opportunity for flu and/or pneumonia shots at the **Hillsdale County Annual Health Fair**. The Annual County-Wide Health Fair is open to all ages and will be held from 9 a.m. to noon at the Perennial Park Senior Center, in Hillsdale. In addition to

getting vaccinations, participants can receive free screenings, healthy snacks and lots of give-aways, while supplies last.

Burns adds “These are two of our largest immunization events. We encourage people to call ahead to schedule a timeslot for getting their shot.” To schedule an appointment in Coldwater, please call 517-279-9561 and follow the prompts. For the Hillsdale event, please call 517-437-7395, ext. 0336#.

If you miss either of these events, the health department will be offering flu and/or pneumonia shots at its local, county offices, located in Coldwater, Hillsdale and Three Rivers. “We prefer that you would call ahead for an appointment, but we welcome walk-ins as well!” Burns adds.

The cost of the flu shot is \$60 for the high dose vaccine, which contains up to four times the antigen found in regular flu vaccine and provides seniors the extra boost they need to prevent flu illness. The health department also offers a quadrivalent vaccine that provides protection against all forms of the flu, including two influenza A strains and two influenza B strains. This vaccination is recommended for anyone age 6 months to 64 years. All vaccines protect against the H1N1 virus (Influenza A strain) which has been associated with severe flu outbreaks in the most recent past. The cost of the quadrivalent vaccine is \$45. The health department accepts most major health insurances, as well as Medicare B, Medicaid and Railroad insurances.

For those children who are uninsured, are covered by Medicaid insurance and/or who have health insurance but lack vaccine coverage, flu shots are provided free of charge. To learn if your child qualifies for the Vaccines for Children Program, call your local health department office and select the immunization program when prompted.

**Please note:** Due to changes in immunization recommendations, the health department is not offering the FluMist this year. The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices which makes recommendation to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has withdrawn its support for the FluMist because it was found to offer less effective protection from the flu.

For more information about how to prevent the flu or to find out about other available immunizations, please visit our website at [www.bhsj.org](http://www.bhsj.org).

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