

NEWS RELEASE

October 1, 2026

**Contact: Rebecca Burns, MPH, RS, Health Officer
517-279-9561 ext. 148**

**Heidi Hazel, BSN, RN Director of Personal Health & Disease Prevention
517-279-9561 ext. 143**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Protect Your Family from Respiratory Illnesses This Fall

Coldwater, MI – Fall is here, and respiratory virus season is underway. The Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency (BHSJ CHA) offers COVID-19, flu, RSV, pneumonia, and pertussis vaccines at all agency offices.

The agency accepts many commercial insurance plans, Medicaid, Medicare Advantage, and Medicare with parts B and D. Free or low-cost vaccines may also be available for eligible residents through the Vaccines for Children (VFC) program for children through age 18 and the Michigan Adult Vaccine Program (MI-AVP) for adults age 19 and older. These programs help people who do not have insurance or whose insurance does not cover certain vaccines.

Call your local office to schedule an appointment:

- **Branch County:** 517-279-9561 ext. 198
- **Hillsdale County:** 517-437-7395 ext. 398
- **St. Joseph County:** 269-273-2161 ext. 298

“Vaccines can help lower the risk of serious illness, hospitalization, and death,” said Dr. Karen Luparello, Medical Director. “Flu and COVID-19 vaccines are updated to help protect against currently circulating variants. Talk with your health care provider or one of our public health nurses about which vaccines are right for you and your family.”

Vaccine recommendations vary by age and health needs. Ask your health care provider which vaccines you or your family members need and whether more than one can be given at the same visit.

Vaccination is one way to help prevent respiratory illness. You can also protect yourself and others by:

- Staying away from people who are sick when possible.

- Staying home when you are sick. If you must go out, consider wearing a mask to protect others.
- Covering your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing, then washing your hands.
- Washing your hands often with soap and water or using hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
- Avoiding touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched surfaces.

The CDC recommends staying home until you have been fever-free for at least 24 hours without fever-reducing medicine and your symptoms are improving. Take extra precautions for the next five days to help protect others.

The Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency is committed to promoting wellness, preventing disease, providing health care, and protecting the environment.

For more information, contact your local office, follow us on Facebook

www.facebook.com/BHSJCHA or Instagram www.instagram.com/bhsj_healthagency.

Branch County
570 N. Marshall Rd.
Coldwater, MI 49036
(517) 279-9561

Hillsdale County
20 Care Drive
Hillsdale, MI 49242
(517) 437-7395

Three Rivers
1110 Hill St.
Three Rivers, MI 49093
(269) 273-2161

Sturgis Office
1555 E. Chicago Rd.
Sturgis, MI 49091
(269) 273-2161
Wednesday - Friday

####