

October 01, 2013

News Release

For Immediate Release

Get vaccinated to protect against flu

Flu season is around the corner and the best method of protection is to receive the flu vaccine. For most people, there are many opportunities to get a flu shot and health officials strongly recommend that anyone who has the means to get vaccinated do so.

Seasonal flu vaccinations are recommended for everyone who is at least 6 months of age. It is especially important for pregnant women, young children, people 65 years and older, and people with compromised immune systems for reasons that may include certain medical conditions such as asthma, diabetes, chronic lung disease, heart disease, kidney disorders and metabolic disorders.

Influenza is a serious disease that can lead to hospitalization and even death. There about 30,000 flu-related deaths in the U.S. each year, and about 90 percent of those are people age 65 and older. The annual seasonal flu vaccine (either a flu shot or the nasal-spray flu vaccine) is the best way to reduce the chances that you will get seasonal flu and lessen the chance that you will spread it to others. It takes up to two weeks for the body to build full immunity after vaccination, which is why getting vaccinated early is important. The typical peak flu season in Springfield runs from January through March.

Those who are covered by insurance plans, including Medicare, should contact their health care provider. With recent changes to health insurance coverage, more and more preventative measures are required to be covered under most plans. Many large employers offer flu shots to employees at no or low cost. Retail locations such as pharmacies are a growing option, as well. Visit www.flu.gov to find locations in the area.

For those without insurance, there are two ways to get a flu shot, depending on whether or not they fall into one of four categories.

The Springfield-Greene County Health Department is now offering seasonal flu vaccine for people who fall into the first three categories:

- Children ages 6 months to 18 years old
- Pregnant women
- People in close contact with babies under 6 months old (because they cannot receive the vaccine themselves)

There is no charge for Greene County residents who are in the above three categories. People who are in the above three categories but do not reside in Greene County can pay a \$17 fee to be vaccinated. Vaccinations are available at the Westside Public Health Center, 660 S. Scenic Ave.,

by appointment or during walk-in clinic hours, **which are from 7:30-10 a.m. on Tuesdays only.** Call (417) 874-1220 to make an appointment.

The Springfield Flu Coalition will offer open flu vaccine clinics for those in the fourth category: adults who lack health insurance. These free clinics are at the following dates and times:

- **Wednesday, Oct. 16, 9-11 a.m.** – Sacred Heart Catholic Church, 1609 N. Summit Ave.
- **Thursday, Oct. 17, 8 a.m.-Noon** – St. Agnes Elementary School Cafeteria, 531 S. Jefferson Ave.
- **Wednesday, Oct. 23, 3-7 p.m.** – Hand-In-Hand Ministries, 1436 W. Hovey St.
- **Sunday, Oct. 27, 1:30-3:30 p.m.** – Sacred Heart Catholic Church, 1609 N. Summit Ave.
- **Tuesday, Nov. 5, 9 a.m.-Noon** – Crosslines, 615 N. Glenstone Ave.
- **Wednesday, Nov. 6, 9:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.** – Salvation Army, 1707 W. Chestnut Expressway

The Flu Coalition is a longstanding partnership that includes CoxHealth, the Greene County Medical Society, Jordan Valley Community Health Center, Mercy Springfield, Ozarks Community Hospital and the Springfield-Greene County Health Department, as well the nursing colleges associated with both Cox and Mercy.

For more information about the Health Department clinics or the Flu Coalition clinics, contact: Mike Brothers, Public Information Administrator, (417) 874-1205.