

September 27, 2012

News Release

For Immediate Release

Flu Vaccine For At-Risk Groups Available in October

The Springfield-Greene County Health Department will begin offering seasonal flu vaccine starting in October for people who fall into 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 \$15 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.

In the coming weeks, the Springfield Flu Coalition will offer flu vaccine clinics for adults who lack health insurance. Those clinics will run from late October through mid-November. The dates will be announced in early October. 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.

Seasonal flu vaccinations are recommended for everyone who is at least 6 months of age. It is especially important for pregnant women, 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.

People who are covered by insurance plans, including Medicare, should contact their health care provider or consider getting vaccinated at a retail location. Visit www.flu.gov to find locations in the area.

For more information, contact: Mike Brothers, Public Information Administrator, Springfield-Greene County Health Department, (417) 874-1205.