



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: December 15, 2010
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FLU IS COMING

Survey Shows Many Still Need to Take Advantage of Abundant Vaccine Supply

YPSILANTI, Michigan, December 15, 2010—Washtenaw County Public Health is encouraging area residents to take advantage of the ample flu vaccine supply and get vaccinated – now. Flu vaccine is universally recommended this year for everyone 6 months and older. Importantly, there is still time to seek vaccination before the holidays. Flu season typically peaks in Michigan in late January through February. Flu often begins spreading when people gather and travel over the holidays. Washtenaw County Public Health is confirming the first, local case of influenza today. The individual had traveled over the Thanksgiving holiday. Statewide, 6 new cases of flu have been confirmed in the past week.

“The holiday season is a time for sharing – unfortunately that includes communicable diseases like influenza,” says Diana Torres-Burgos, MD, MPH, Medical Director for Washtenaw County Public Health. “We know a lot of local residents planned to get a flu vaccine this year, and we’re encouraging people to get vaccinated in time for the holidays,” she continued.

This year, Washtenaw County residents were surveyed as a part of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s Rapid Flu Survey. Washtenaw County was one of 20 local areas chosen nationwide. The first part of the survey took place in November 2010, and it will be repeated in March 2011.

Washtenaw County Survey Findings

- As of November 7, 2010, 37% of local adults reported receiving flu vaccination this flu season. Of those not yet receiving a flu vaccination, 36% said they will “definitely” or “probably” get vaccinated this season.
- Parents and caregivers of 35% of children 6 months through 17 years of age reported that their child had already received a flu vaccine this season. Within this group, the local data suggest flu vaccination rates for school-age children (5-12 years of age) are lagging behind. Parents and caregivers of 55% of children not yet vaccinated reported that they will “definitely” or “probably” seek flu vaccination for their children this season.

- Disparities in vaccination rates persist. Local flu vaccination rates among non-Hispanic blacks (28%) were substantially lower than those for non-Hispanic whites (40%) as of November 7.
- When local residents were asked why they or their child did not receive an influenza vaccination, 32% stated that they “Never get the flu.”

Some persons can be infected with the flu virus but have no symptoms. During this time, those persons may still spread the virus to others. Babies younger than 6 months are too young to get the flu vaccine, but they are at higher risk for complications and death from flu. Because of this, it is important that family members and other people that care for young infants get vaccinated to help ensure that they do not transmit the infection to them.

Most people who get the flu will have mild illness, will not need medical care and will recover in less than two weeks. Some people, however, are more likely to get flu complications that result in being hospitalized and occasionally result in death. Pneumonia, bronchitis, sinus infections and ear infections are examples of flu-related complications. The flu can also make chronic health problems worse, like asthma and heart failure.

Flu vaccination is available from local health care providers, pharmacies and at Washtenaw County Public Health. Public Health has added an additional flu vaccination clinic on Monday, December 20th from 2:00 pm to 4:00 pm. Please call 734-544-6700 for a time slot. The pneumonia vaccine and Tdap (the pertussis-containing) vaccine are also available at this clinic. Or, utilize the Google flu vaccine finder (www.google.com/flushot). A record number of doses of flu vaccine - 163 million – have been distributed this flu season; over 3.6 million have been distributed in Michigan.

Flu seasons are unpredictable and can be severe. Compared with other infections, such as the common cold, influenza is more likely to cause severe illness and life-threatening complications in many people. Studies going back 30 years show that seasonal flu-related deaths have ranged from about 3,000 people to 49,000 people annually in the U.S.

It is not too late to get your flu vaccine. "We continue to encourage all Michigan citizens to get vaccinated throughout the entire flu season - it is the single best way to prevent the flu," said Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH) Director Janet Olszewski.

For more details on the local survey or about Washtenaw County Public Health, please visit <http://publichealth.washtenaw.org>, or call us at 734-544-6700.

Visit the Michigan Department of Community Health's flu page at www.michigan.gov/flu.

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