



St. Mary's County Health Department

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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HEALTH DEPARTMENT ANNOUNCES DECEMBER FLU VACCINE CLINIC

*Vaccination during December and January is still the single best way
to protect you and your loved ones from the flu*

LEONARDTOWN, MD (November 29, 2006) – St. Mary's County Health Department is encouraging people who have not gotten vaccinated yet this year to do so at their upcoming Flu Vaccine Clinic scheduled for 9 a.m. – 6 p.m., Friday, Dec. 8 at the health department in Leonardtown.

Influenza is a serious disease that can keep you from enjoying this special time of year. As you get caught up in the holidays, the one thing you don't want to catch is the flu, advises St. Mary's County Health Officer, Dr. William Icenhower. "Vaccination is the single best way to protect yourself and your loved ones against influenza through the holidays and beyond."

The months of December and January are still appropriate times to seek vaccination because influenza doesn't peak until February or later during most years.

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According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), each year in the United States, between 5 and 20 percent of the population is infected with influenza, about 36,000 people die and more than 200,000 people are hospitalized because of influenza complications. Influenza vaccination can provide protection to a wide number of people, and is an important factor in minimizing the risk and severity of flu transmission

The health department recommends vaccination for anyone who wants to decrease their chance of catching the flu. While anyone can get influenza - and the infection can be severe - many groups, including people aged 50 years or more, those with chronic illnesses (heart disease, lung disease, kidney disease, diabetes), and pregnant women, are at highest risk for complications. In addition, those in close contact with these high risk persons, such as health care personnel, and healthy household contacts and caregivers of high risk persons, are also at increased risk and should get vaccinated.

The nasal spray flu vaccine, Flu Mist®, will be offered at the upcoming clinic for children and adults 5 – 49 years. Injectable flu vaccine will also be available for people who are not eligible to receive the nasal spray flu vaccine.

The health department is asking visitors to the clinic to wear loose fitting clothing, or long sleeves over short sleeves for ease and privacy when receiving the vaccine. The recommended donation for the flu vaccine is \$10, however no one will be denied a vaccine due to inability to

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pay. Medicare part B is accepted. Health department staff will bill Medicare for those participants who are eligible. Pneumonia vaccines will also be available. For more information, please call the St. Mary's County Health Department, 301-475-4330.

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