



St. Mary's County Health Department

NEWS RELEASE

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HEALTH DEPARTMENT REMINDS RESIDENTS OF STEPS TO PREVENT THE FLU

LEONARDTOWN, MD (January 14, 2013) – While vaccination is the best form of protection against the virus that causes influenza, the St. Mary's County Health Department reminds residents of additional steps that can help prevent the spread of flu and protect those who may have flu:

- Wash your hands with soap and water (or an alcohol-based hand rub if soap and water are unavailable) before touching your eyes, nose, or mouth
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth to prevent the spread of germs
- Try to avoid close contact with people who are ill with the flu or other contagious respiratory illnesses
- Practice good health habits - get plenty of sleep and exercise, manage your stress, drink water, and eat healthy foods
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, and throw the tissue in the trash after you use it. If a tissue is unavailable, cough or sneeze into your elbow, not your hand.
- If you are sick with a flu-like illness, avoid close contact with others – especially children, pregnant women, and older adults. Stay out of schools and workplaces for at least 24 hours after your fever has subsided without the use of fever-reducing medicine.

(more)

- If you suspect you have flu or have been diagnosed with flu, early treatment with antiviral drugs may shorten the duration of your flu symptoms and reduce the risk of complications from flu. Antiviral drugs should be started as early as possible (ideally within 48 hours of the start of symptoms) *for persons at higher risk of influenza complications*. Talk to your primary care provider to see if you should consider antiviral drug treatment for flu.

The health department prefers that all residents receive flu vaccine through their primary care physician's office; however, the health department is also offering flu vaccination by appointment only while supplies are available. Vaccination is free for children over the age of six months. Vaccination can also be administered to adults for a fee of \$20. Please call 301-475-4316 to schedule an appointment. The health department has increased its available appointment times to better serve the community's needs.

For more information on influenza vaccination and flu prevention strategies, please visit the CDC website at <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/disease/index.htm>

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