

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 30, 2013

For More Information Contact

Margaret O'Dell, M.D., director, New River Health District, 540-381-7100

Robert Parker, public information officer, Western Region, 540-381-7100, x 151 or 540-580-2960

NEW RIVER HEALTH DISTRICT OFFERS FREE SEASONAL FLU VACCINE AT DRIVE-THRU CLINIC FOR ADULTS

(CHRISTIANSBURG, Virginia) – The New River Health District will offer free seasonal flu vaccine at a special drive-thru dispensing clinic on Friday, Oct. 4 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Old Christiansburg High School, 208 College St. in Christiansburg.

Only 400 doses of vaccine will be available, and will be offered to anyone 18 years and older on a first-come, first-served basis. Be sure to wear clothing that is loose around the arm so that a public health nurse can administer the flu shot in the upper arm, without your having to leave the comfort and convenience of your car.

“We’ve already documented cases of influenza this season in the New River Valley, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Virginia Department of Health recommend vaccination each year for everyone 6 months and older,” said Margaret O’Dell, M.D., director, New River Health District. “Vaccination is the best way to prevent influenza and its potentially severe complications, and this unique ‘drive-thru’ approach is proven to be a fast and efficient way to vaccinate a large number of folks in a short time.”

“The timing and duration of flu seasons vary - they can occur from early fall to late spring - so you should get the vaccine as soon as it’s available,” said Brenda B. Burrus, RN, MSED, nurse manager senior for the New River Health District. “It takes up to two weeks to develop the vaccine’s full protection, and the benefits last for up to a year.”

All persons aged six months or older should be vaccinated against influenza each year. Particular effort should be made to vaccinate people at higher risk for influenza complications, including:

- Pregnant and postpartum women, or those who will be pregnant during the influenza season;
- Persons over 65 years of age, including residents of nursing homes and long-term care facilities;
- People who have chronic lung or heart problems, including asthma; and
- People who have other serious medical conditions, such as diabetes, kidney disease, cystic fibrosis, anemia, cancer, weak immune systems (including those with HIV) or a seizure disorder.

To help prevent the spread of influenza to people in high risk groups, those who live with people in a high risk group and healthcare workers should also receive an annual influenza

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vaccine. Travelers to countries outside of the U.S. may also need to consider influenza vaccination, even at different times of the year.

Influenza, commonly called “the flu,” is a serious disease caused by the influenza virus that affects the respiratory tract. It is highly contagious and generally spreads from person-to-person when an infected person coughs or sneezes. The virus can be transmitted even before flu-like symptoms appear. A person usually becomes sick one to three days following exposure to the virus. Typical flu symptoms include fever, dry cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, headache, muscle aches and extreme fatigue.

Each year in the U.S. approximately 200,000 people are hospitalized due to flu illness, and flu-related deaths range from 3,000 to 49,000 each year, averaging 24,000 per year over the last three decades.

To minimize your risk of contracting or transmitting the flu, follow these simple steps:

- Get vaccinated;
- Wash your hands frequently and thoroughly, for at least 20 seconds;
- Cover your cough, either by using a disposable tissue or coughing into your sleeve, not your hand; and
- Stay at home when you are sick.

For more information, call the New River Health District at 540-585-3300 or visit www.vdh.virginia.gov.

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