

ANDREW J. SPANO, Westchester County Executive
JOSHUA LIPSMAN, M.D., M.P.H., Commissioner of Health
SUSAN TOLCHIN, Director of Communications

CONTACT: SUSAN TOLCHIN
MARY LANDRIGAN

(914) 995-2932
(914) 813-5013
(914) 813-5000 (After Hours)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 1, 2003

IT'S NOT TOO LATE TO GET A FLU SHOT!
Health Department Identifies First Flu Cases Of The Season

The Westchester County Department of Health today announced that four flu cases have already been identified in Westchester this season and that it will be offering additional low-cost flu-shot clinics at its White Plains and Yonkers district offices.

“Flu shots are particularly important now because of the possibility of a more severe flu season,” said Westchester County Health Commissioner Joshua Lipsman, M.D. M.P.H.

For those covered by Medicare, the flu shots are free; otherwise there is a \$12 fee for the flu shot. The pneumococcal vaccine is available for \$20. Appointments are necessary. For information on how to schedule an appointment, residents should call the Health Department at (914) 813-5000.

Yonkers District Office, 20 South Broadway:

12/5 9 a.m. - 11 a.m.
12/9 9 a.m. - 11 a.m.
12/19 1 p.m. - 3 p.m.
12/23 9 a.m. - 11 a.m.

White Plains District Office, 85 Court Street:

12/2 9 a.m. - Noon; 1 p.m. - 4 p.m.
12/16 9 a.m. - Noon; 1:00 - 4 p.m.

Influenza is a highly contagious disease that infects 10 to 20 percent of the population in the United States

each year. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, an average of 36,000 people die from influenza complications, with another 114,000 being hospitalized, each year. Most deaths are among those over 65 years of age, the very young, or those with other serious health conditions.

‘High-risk’ individuals who should receive influenza vaccine include anyone over 65 years of age and those of any age with chronic diseases, such as heart or lung diseases, diabetes, asthma, or compromised immune systems. The same high-risk individuals should receive a pneumonia vaccine at least once and should speak to their physicians about the need for revaccination.

People who are otherwise healthy but who may transmit influenza to high-risk individuals should also be vaccinated. This includes healthcare workers both in institutional and home care settings, and people living in the same households as individuals at high risk for serious illness with influenza. In addition, any person who wishes to reduce the likelihood of becoming ill with influenza is encouraged to receive the vaccine.

However, some groups should consult their private physicians before getting any flu vaccinations. These include people who:

- are allergic to eggs;
- have a history of serious allergic condition or reaction to flu vaccine in the past (fever, rash, etc.);
- have had previous attacks of Guillain-Barre Syndrome, a neurological illness following viral infections or other chronic neurological illnesses;
- are pregnant (it is currently recommended that women in their second and third trimesters get a flu shot);
- have an acute febrile illness.

For more information on influenza and flu-shot clinics, call the Westchester County Department of Health at (914) 813-5000, or visit its website at www.westchestergov.com/health.

