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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**TIME TO GET YOUR FLU SHOT
County Health Department Offers Flu Shot Clinics for Eligible Residents**

With the winter season approaching, the Westchester County Department of Health is reminding residents to protect themselves and their loved ones from influenza this year by getting flu shots. To assist residents, the Health Department has scheduled 51 flu shot clinics throughout Westchester to be held between **October 22 and November 30.**

The Health Department clinics will provide flu shots to Westchester residents over 50 years of age; those who are 18 years of age and older with chronic heart or lung conditions, diabetes, or compromised immune systems; pregnant women 18 years of age or older; and caregivers (including healthcare workers) of high-risk patients. Persons less than 18 years old should receive the flu shot from a primary care provider.

Residents should call the Westchester County Health Department at (914) 813-5000 for information on dates and locations of the clinics that are most convenient for them. They then will need to call the clinic site of their choice to make an appointment. Appointments are necessary to ensure that sufficient vaccine is available at the site. For those with Medicare Part B or Aetna Medicare coverage, there is no charge for the flu shot. For others, the fee is \$15.

"The flu season typically runs from October to April and the earlier you get a flu shot the better," said Dr. Joshua Lipsman, Commissioner of Health for Westchester County. "Vaccination is particularly important for those over 50 years of age and for children from six months to 59 months old, but most people can benefit from the protection."

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Certain categories of people should consult their primary care providers prior to receiving the flu shot.

These include people who:

- are allergic to eggs;
- have a history of a serious reaction to the flu vaccine in the past (i.e. fever, rash or breathing difficulties);
- have had Guillain-Barre Syndrome, a neurological illness following viral infections, or have a chronic neurological illness;
- have an acute illness with fever or serious breathing difficulties.

The influenza strains circulating in the community vary from year to year, making annual vaccination necessary for protection. The flu vaccine requires one to two weeks to take effect and offers protection throughout the entire usual season.

Pneumococcal vaccinations will also be available at Health Department flu shot clinics for County residents over 65 years of age. Those between the ages of 18 and 65 years of age who have a chronic medical condition may be able to get a pneumococcal vaccine if they have a prescription from a primary care provider. For those 65 years of age and older, a single pneumococcal vaccine usually offers protection for life. However, those receiving their first pneumococcal vaccine at a younger age may require a booster shot after five years.

For those with Medicare Part B or Aetna Medicare coverage, there is no charge for the pneumococcal vaccine. For others, the fee is \$30.

“Pneumococcal disease results in up to 40,000 deaths and 175,000 hospitalizations in this country each year,” said Dr. Lipsman. “About half of those deaths could be prevented by a single vaccination.”

For more information, please call the Westchester County Health Department at (914) 813-5000 or visit the Health Department website at www.westchestergov.com/health