

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

CONTACT: CAREN HALBFINGER

(914) 813-5013

(914) 813-5000 (After Hours)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 18, 2008

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

With flu 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 **40 flu shot clinics throughout Westchester** to be held **between October 20 and November 18**.

The Health Department clinics will provide flu shots to Westchester residents over 50 years of age and to those who are 18 - 49 years of age with chronic medical conditions. Persons less than 18 years old should receive the flu shot from a primary care provider.

Pneumococcal vaccinations will also be available at Health Department flu shot clinics. Those between the ages of 18 and 64 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 and no prescription is needed. However, those receiving their first pneumococcal vaccine at a younger age may require a booster shot after five years.

Residents should call the Westchester County Health Department at (914) 813-5000 for information on dates and locations of the clinics. 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 \$18. For those with Medicare Part B or Aetna Medicare coverage, there is no charge for the pneumococcal vaccine. For others, the fee is \$30.

MORE

"The flu season typically runs from October through April," said Dr. Joshua Lipsman, Commissioner of Health for Westchester County. "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."

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.

Influenza is responsible for approximately 200,000 hospitalizations and 36,000 deaths annually in the United States. An estimated 5,000 people die from invasive pneumococcal disease each year; nearly half of which are older adults for whom vaccination is recommended.

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