

For immediate release:

The Belmont County Health Department will begin giving flu vaccine to Belmont County residents on Wednesday, September 14, 2011 at the Belmont County Health Department from 9AM to 11AM and 1:00PM to 3:00PM. Cost of the vaccine is \$22, which is covered by Medicare Part B and the Medicaid card. The health department is also an approved provider of the Upper Ohio Valley Health Plan. Those receiving the vaccine must have his or her insurance card at the time of the vaccination.

According to the CDC, the 2011-2012 vaccine will protect against an influenza A H3N2 virus, an influenza B virus and the H1N1 virus that emerged in 2009 to cause a pandemic. Everyone 6 months of age and older should get a flu vaccine. Vaccination of high risk persons is especially important to decrease their risk of severe flu illness. People at high risk of serious flu complications include young children, pregnant women, people with chronic health conditions like asthma, diabetes or heart and lung disease and people 65 years and older.

Vaccination also is important for health care workers, and other people who live with or care for high risk people to keep from spreading flu to high risk people. Children younger than 6 months are at high risk of serious flu illness, but are too young to be vaccinated. People who care for them should be vaccinated instead.

The flu is spread by coughing, sneezing or nasal secretions. Symptoms are fever/chills, cough, sore throat, headache, muscle aches, fatigue and runny or stuffy nose. Influenza season usually occurs from October through May. The following precautions should be taken by everyone:

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- If you are sick with flu-like illness, CDC recommends that you stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone except to get medical care or for other necessities. (Your fever should be gone without the use of a fever-reducing medicine.)
- While sick, limit contact with others as much as possible to keep from infecting them.

For more information, contact the Belmont County Health Department Immunization nurse Cathy Watson, RN at (740) 695-1202 extension 19 or the health department website at www.belmontcountyhealth.org.