



NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

2006-2007 INFLUENZA SEASON

Influenza (commonly called “flu”) is a highly contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses. It can be mild or severe and infects millions of Americans every year. On average, more than 200,000 people are hospitalized annually and about 36,000 people die from complications of the flu. The best way to prevent getting the flu is to get vaccinated.

For the 2006-2007 influenza season, five licensed vaccine manufacturers expect to provide more than 100 million doses of influenza “flu” vaccine to the U. S. population. Based upon this, a total of 19 million more doses of vaccine will be distributed this year than in 2005.

According to the State Department of Public Health, the official influenza season has just begun, with cases of the flu being confirmed by the State Laboratory. People with influenza usually experience a rapid onset of fever, chills, headache and muscle aches followed by a running nose, sore throat and cough. Symptoms can often be severe and last for many days. Most persons with influenza recover within two to seven days.

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), there is always some uncertainty about how much influenza vaccine will be produced and when it will be distributed. Recently health officials noted that some health care providers and doctors offices are waiting to receive some or all of their influenza vaccine. They have also stated that if providers have confirmed an order for purchase, in most cases the shipment of vaccine will be received. To ensure an adequate supply of vaccine for administration, the Department of Health has scheduled immunization clinics for the month of November. Although there is confidence that the vaccine order will be delivered in a timely manner, the clinic schedule outlined in this release is subject to cancellation and/or rescheduling. If this becomes necessary, the public will be notified of any changes as soon as possible.

Director of Health, Caroline C. Baisley, emphasized that “although some communities may need to adjust their clinic vaccination schedules to accommodate delayed or small quantity product shipments, changes to a schedule should not cause alarm. Getting vaccinated in November and December can still be beneficial since sustained influenza transmission is not seen before January, or later, in most years. The Department of Health is committed to working with the medical community in an effort to provide vaccine to those at highest risk for complications from influenza, as well as others seeking protection against the influenza virus. All residents are being asked to exercise patience while the Department plans clinic activities.”

Greenwich residents 18 years of age or older who wish to reduce their risk of getting the flu can get vaccinated at the Department clinics. The following high risk groups are strongly encouraged to receive the vaccine:

High Risk Groups

- Adults 50 years or older
- Pregnant women
- Adults over 18 years of age with underlying chronic medical conditions requiring frequent or ongoing medical management.
- Residents of nursing homes and long-term care facilities
- Health care personnel who provide direct patient care (i.e. doctors, nurses, etc.)
- Household contacts 18 years or older and out-of-home caregivers of infants under 6 months of age.
- Adult household contacts of persons at high risk due to medical conditions

Note: Influenza vaccine is also recommended for children 6 – 59 months of age, however immunization will not be administered to individuals under 18 years of age at scheduled clinics. Parents are advised to contact their pediatricians. Those who need assistance from the Department’s Family Health Division are encouraged to call 622-3782 or 622-7854 for consultation.

An alternative to the flu shot for healthy individuals between the ages of 5 and 49 is *FluMist*, the nasal mist flu vaccine. *FluMist* is made with live, weakened flu viruses that do not cause the flu when administered. Although *FluMist* is not recommended for those who are pregnant, it can be used by persons, including health care workers, who are not caring for severely immunocompromised patients in special care units. Persons in close contact with groups at high risk for influenza-related complications and others desiring protection against the flu can also use it. *FluMist* (LAIV) may be available in some doctor’s offices and pharmacies.

Who Should NOT Get the Flu Shot

- People who have a hypersensitivity or severe allergy to eggs
- People who have had a severe reaction to a flu vaccine in the past or are allergic to other components of the vaccine
- People who previously developed Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS) within 6 weeks of getting a flu shot
- Children less than 6 months of age
- People who have a moderate or severe illness with a fever should wait until their symptoms lessen before receiving a vaccination

During each scheduled clinic pneumococcal vaccine will be available to qualified takers. The following list outlines the required criteria:

Qualifications for Pneumococcal Vaccine

- Greenwich residents only
- Adults 65 years or older
- Adults aged 18-64 who have long-term medical conditions
- Persons who received a pneumococcal vaccination **before** the age of 65 should have a booster if it has been five or more years since the vaccination

“Although the single best way to prevent the flu is to get vaccinated (flu shot or nasal spray flu vaccine), there are other ways to protect yourself from respiratory illnesses,” states Acting Director of Family Health, Deborah Travers. Those steps include:

- **Avoid close contact with people who are sick.** Keep your distance from others when you are sick
- **Stay home when you are sick.** You will prevent others from catching your illness
- **Cover your mouth and nose** with a tissue when coughing or sneezing
- **Clean your hands** by washing or using sanitizing gel when water is not available
- **Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth** with your hands since surfaces can be contaminated with germs
- **Get plenty of sleep, water, healthy food and exercise**
- **Seek medical care early.** Consult your health care provider immediately if you develop flu symptoms.

During the influenza season, the public is encouraged to call the Department of Health flu information line for up-to-date information at 203-622-3774, or visit the Department’s website at www.greenwichct.org. Residents should also contact their medical providers for vaccine availability and stay tuned for changes to clinic schedules through local media coverage.

Influenza and Pneumonia Immunization Clinic Schedule – 2006

Scheduled clinics will be the only opportunities to receive vaccination from the Greenwich Department of Health. Residents are advised to contact their physician after these dates.

Wednesday, November 8, 2006

Christ Church

254 East Putnam Avenue

3:00 – 7:00 PM

Tuesday, November 14, 2006

Eastern Greenwich Civic Center

Harding Road, Old Greenwich

3:00 – 6:00 PM

Monday, November 27, 2006
Eastern Greenwich Civic Center
Harding Road, Old Greenwich
3:00 – 7:00 PM

Thursday, November 30, 2006
Greenwich Town Hall
Town Hall Meeting Room
101 Field Point Road, Greenwich
4:00 – 8:00 PM

All flu clinic participants must provide proof of residency. Residents 65 years of age or older must bring their Connecticut Medicare Part B Card or a fee of \$20.00 will be charged for each immunization. **HMO Medicare such as HealthNet Smartchoice and Medicaid will not be accepted.** Participants with an HMO Medicare provider will be given a receipt to submit to their insurance for reimbursement.

Residents between the ages of 18 and 64 will be charged a \$20.00 fee for each immunization. Checks should be made payable to the “**TOWN OF GREENWICH**” and if paying with cash, exact change will be appreciated.

Short sleeve shirts and attendance no earlier that 15 minutes before the start of the clinic will be appreciated.

The public is encouraged to call 203-622-3774 prior to attending any clinic. Any changes to the set schedule will be recorded and publicized.