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Health Department helps Northwest Michigan prepare for flu season

With influenza threats on tap for the 2014-2015 flu season, the Health Department of Northwest Michigan is helping communities prepare by offering flu vaccines to area children, adults and seniors. It's also working with local schools, businesses and community partners to provide flu vaccine clinics throughout the area. Visit the Health Department's Web site at www.nwhealth.org, or on Facebook at www.facebook.com/nwhealthdepartment, for flu clinic locations and schedules, and call **(800) 432-4121** to schedule appointments for the whole family to receive their flu vaccines.

According to Joshua Meyerson, M.D., Medical Director for the Health Department, annual vaccination is the single best way to protect against the flu, and everyone six (6) months of age and older should receive a seasonal flu vaccine.

"Vaccination can prevent serious illness and save lives, especially among young children and older adults," Meyerson said. "Everyone should be vaccinated, to prevent the spread of illness."

The Health Department has vaccine in stock, and appointments are available for flu shots and other vaccines at its offices in Bellaire, Mancelona, Charlevoix, Petoskey/Harbor Springs and Gaylord. Local schools and senior centers are also hosting vaccination clinics in partnership with the Health Department. Cost for seasonal flu vaccination is \$30. Medicaid and Medicare are accepted, as well as private insurance, or clients may pay by cash or check. Call the Health Department at **(800) 432-4121** to schedule an appointment. You can also visit www.nwhealth.org or www.facebook.com/nwhealthdepartment for details on flu clinics being offered at a school or business in your area.

Flu vaccinations offer protection throughout the entire flu season, which can begin as early as October and last as late as May. There are two types of flu vaccines: the flu shot, approved for use in people six (6) months of age and older, including healthy people, people with chronic medical conditions and pregnant women; and the nasal-spray flu vaccine, approved for use in healthy people from 2-49 years of age who are not pregnant.

The Health Department of Northwest Michigan is mandated by the Michigan Public Health Code to promote wellness, prevent disease, provide quality healthcare, address health problems of vulnerable populations, and protect the environment for the residents and visitors of Antrim, Charlevoix, Emmet, and Otsego Counties. For more information, call **(800) 432-4121** or visit www.nwhealth.org.

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