

RELAXED FLU VACCINE CRITERIA PROMPTS SCHEDULING OF AN ADDITIONAL FLU CLINIC

Recorded Information Line – 01/03/05

“If you are aged 50 to 64, an out-of-home caregiver or household contact of a person in a high-risk group for serious complications from influenza, you are now eligible to receive a flu vaccine,” says Diane O’Hora, Supervising Public Health Educator for the Broome County Health Department. Effective January 3, 2005, after assessing the demand for vaccine among high-risk New Yorkers and reallocating vaccine to meet the demand, the New York State Department of Health expanded the list of priority groups eligible to receive the vaccine in areas where vaccine supplies are sufficient.

Due to the updated recommendations, the Broome County Health Department, 225 Front Street, Binghamton, will hold a flu immunization clinic on **Friday, January 7, 2005 from 2:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.** For those people who are on Medicare, Medicare-Part B will pay for the flu vaccine. Individuals must present their Medicare Card to clinic staff. **Those participating in a Managed Medicare program must go to their primary care provider.** All other persons will be charged a fee of \$20.

“We hope people who fit into the expanded priority groups will take advantage of this opportunity,” says O’Hora. “The number of reported flu cases in Broome County is increasing, and it is difficult to predict whether we are at the peak or not.”

The best way for individuals to protect themselves against flu is through vaccination. Based on the new recommendations, the following people are now eligible to receive the flu vaccine:

- adults aged 50 years and over;
- persons aged 2–49 years with underlying chronic medical conditions;
- all women who will be pregnant during the influenza season;
- residents of nursing homes and long-term care facilities;
- children aged 2–18 years on chronic aspirin therapy;
- health-care workers involved in direct patient care;
- out-of-home caregivers and household contacts of people in high-risk groups, such as people aged \geq 65 years; people with chronic medical conditions or weakened immune systems; and children under age 2; and
- all children aged 6–23 months.

Parents are advised to seek flu shots for children under the age of 3 with a chronic medical condition and those between the ages of 6-23 months at their regular medical provider.

Note: The Broome County Health Department will provide flu shots to children in these priority groups by appointment only. Parents should call **607.778.2839** to schedule an appointment.

Residents are urged to call the Health Department Influenza Information Line at 607.778.3911, Option 1, to hear a recording of current clinic schedule or go to the Broome County Government website at www.gobroomecounty.com and click on the flu icon.