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**Media**

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### **COMMUNITY RESIDENTS URGED TO GET FLU VACCINATIONS THIS YEAR**

(Berrien County) - Berrien County health officials are urging residents to get vaccinated against the flu. Every person six months and older should get the flu vaccine every year, especially certain groups who are considered at highest risk, like young children, pregnant women, and adults who have chronic health conditions or are over the age of sixty-five.

Anyone can get the flu, including healthy children and adults. Receiving a flu vaccine is the most effective method of preventing the flu. If you receive a vaccination and still get the flu, the vaccine may make flu symptoms milder and the length of illness shorter. The vaccine will also prevent you from spreading the flu to others, including those at risk of more serious illness.

According to the CDC, during the 2017-2018 flu season the flu caused over 80,000 deaths nationwide, including 180 influenza-related pediatric deaths, and over 900,000 hospitalizations resulting in one of the worst years for flu activity in decades in the United States.

Because it takes approximately two weeks for the flu shot to provide full protection against the influenza virus, it is recommended that residents receive their vaccine before the end of October. There are many locations where residents can receive a flu vaccine, including the Berrien County Health Department, area pharmacies, and through their family doctor's office. Most insurance plans fully cover the cost of the annual flu vaccine.

In addition to vaccination, everyone can help prevent flu with frequent handwashing and by covering coughs and sneezes. If you do get sick, it is recommended that you stay home from work, school, or other public gatherings to help reduce the spread of illness.

The Berrien County Health Department will offer walk-in flu vaccinations at their offices in Benton Harbor and Niles every Friday starting on October 12<sup>th</sup> through December. Flu shots will be offered at the Health Department Three Oaks office on October 26<sup>th</sup> from 10am-4pm with no appointment necessary. High-dose flu vaccinations and pneumonia vaccinations are also offered for those over age sixty-five. Most insurance plans will cover the cost for these vaccines, but no one will be turned away for an inability to pay.

For more information, visit the Berrien County Health Department website at [www.bchdmi.org](http://www.bchdmi.org) or call (269) 926-7121.

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