

***Influenza shot provides protection against potentially serious illness***

Dateline – CHICAGO : Millions of people at serious risk for influenza-related complications have not yet been vaccinated, according to the American Medical Association (AMA) and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). In response to this information the AMA and CDC have declared the first two weeks of December the “National Influenza Vaccination Catch-Up” fortnight.

Influenza (sometimes referred to as “the flu”) is a serious disease resulting in an average of 110,000 hospitalizations and 20,000 deaths annually. It also leads to millions of doctor visits and results in many missed days at work.

“The best defense against getting influenza is getting vaccinated now,” the organizations said in a joint statement. “There is plenty of influenza vaccine available this season, so those still needing vaccine should receive it now. In general, influenza seasons do not peak until January or later, which gives patients who get vaccinated now enough time to be properly protected. For some people, getting immunized could be a life-saving decision.”

The AMA and CDC specifically are encouraging all physicians to check their records to see which of their high risk patients need influenza vaccine, but have not yet been vaccinated for the current season. Elderly patients and those with medical conditions, such as diabetes, or heart or lung diseases including asthma, are considered high-risk and should schedule their influenza shot as soon as possible. Health care workers and people who live with high risk persons also are encouraged to receive the influenza vaccine so that they don’t pass the infection to those at high risk.

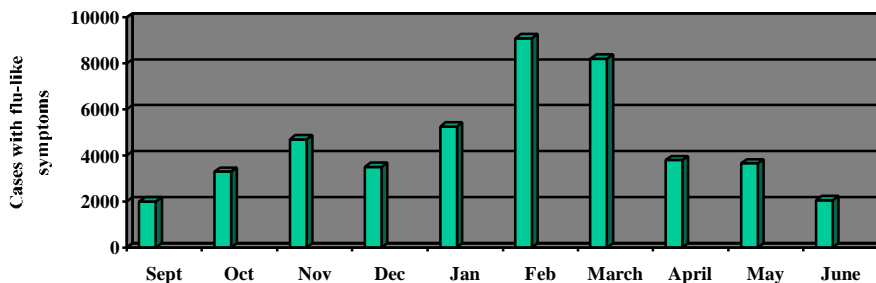
Even those people who aren’t in high-risk categories face a variety of problems, ranging from high fever and lingering fatigue to lost days at work, and missing holiday events. To avoid getting influenza, these people should also consider getting the vaccine.

Patients and with any questions about the influenza vaccine can call the Branch Hillsdale St. Joseph Community Health Agency at

<b>Coldwater site</b>	<b>: 517-279-9561</b>	<b>570 N. Marshall Rd., Coldwater</b>
<b>Hillsdale site</b>	<b>: 517-437-7395</b>	<b>20 Care Dr., Hillsdale</b>
<b>Sturgis site</b>	<b>: 269-659-4013</b>	<b>600 S. Lakeview Ave, Sturgis</b>
<b>Three Rivers site</b>	<b>: 269-273-2161</b>	<b>1110 Hill St., Three Rivers</b>

Flu shots are still available through the Branch/Hillsdale/St. Joseph Community Health Agency, by appointment, Monday through Friday from 8-4. Please call the numbers listed below to get your shot today.

**Michigan influenza Season  
2000/01**



**Peak months for influenza activity are February and March.  
It’s still not too late to get your shot. Call for an appointment today.**