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New recommendations target individuals 50-plus

Flu, Pneumococcal Shot Clinics Scheduled for October and November

Following the latest recommendations of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Oak Park Department of Public Health officials are urging residents age 50 and older to take advantage of the Village's annual fall flu and pneumococcal immunizations clinics.

"Each year, influenza causes 20,000 deaths in the U.S. alone. In past years, health officials stressed the need for people 65 years old and older to be immunized. This year, the CDC is recommending immunizations for everyone 50 or older because nearly one third of individuals within this category have chronic illness, which make them especially vulnerable to the virus," said Health Director Georgeen Polyak, PhD.

A flu shot is recommended for anyone over 50 years of age as well as anyone who has a serious long-term health problem including heart, lung or kidney disease, or who cares for the elderly or chronically ill.

"An annual shot is necessary because flu viruses change from year to year," Dr. Polyak explained. "A new flu vaccine is developed each year to protect against the particular virus that will be circulating. Because flu usually strikes from November to spring, the best protection is vaccination in the fall."

Children and teenagers who are on long-term aspirin therapy also should get a flu shot. In addition, the CDC is encouraging flu shots for healthy children ages six to 23 months. However, two inoculations a month apart are required for children under nine years old who have never before taken a flu shot. Parents who wish to have their children immunized for flu at a Village clinic should contact the Health Department for more information.

The cost of both flu and pneumococcal shots are covered by Medicare B, but recipients must bring their Medicare card to the clinic to demonstrate eligibility. Medicare recipients who are part of an HMO should check with their insurer before visiting a Village clinic. These individuals may be required to get flu and pneumococcal shots from their own HMO doctor in order to be covered. The cost of the flu shot for non-Medicare recipients will be \$15 for Village residents and \$20 for non-residents. The cost of the pneumococcal shot will be \$20 for residents and \$30 for non-residents.

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Flu Shot Clinics
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Dr. Polyak said that individuals should not fear catching the flu from the shot since the vaccine is made from killed viruses. She said the only side effect might be soreness or redness at the site of the flu shot, which usually goes away in a day or two.

The Oak Park Health Department will offer flu and pneumococcal immunizations at the following times and sites:

Mon., Oct. 27, 1-4 p.m.
Dole Center
255 Augusta St.

Wed., Oct. 29, 1-4 p.m.
Heritage House
201 Lake St.

Mon., Nov. 3, 1-4 p.m.
Holley Court Terrace
1111 Ontario St.

Wed., Nov. 5, 1-4 p.m.
The Oaks
114 S. Humphrey Ave.

Thurs., Nov. 6, 1-4 p.m.
Oak Park Fire Department
100 North Euclid Ave.

Mon., Nov. 10, 1-4 p.m.
Oak Park Township
Senior Lunch Program
408 S. Oak Park Ave.

Wed., Nov. 12, 1-4 p.m.
Mills Tower
1025 Pleasant Place

Thurs., Nov. 13, 3-7 p.m.
Oak Park Conservatory
615 Garfield St.

Mon., November 17, 1-4 p.m.
Oak Park Arms
408 S. Oak Park Ave.

Thurs., Nov. 20, 1-4 p.m.
Oak Park Fire Department
100 North Euclid Ave.

Thurs., Nov. 20, 5-7 p.m.
Health Department Clinic
320 Lake St.

For more information, contact the Health Department at 708.358.5486 or email health@oak-park.us.

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