Press Release

For Immediate Release
December 20, 2014
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Flu Cases on the Rise – Public Health Recommends 3 Pronged Approach to Fighting the Flu

XENIA, OH—Seasonal influenza, often referred to simply as “the flu,” causes approximately 150,000 hospital admissions and 24,000 deaths annually in the United States. Persons with certain health conditions are at high risk for serious flu complications. Even healthy people can get sick enough to miss work or school for a significant amount of time or even be hospitalized. Flu activity usually peaks in the U.S. in January or February, however the flu season has started early this year. Over the past week across Ohio, including Greene and Clinton Counties, there has been an increase in the numbers of persons coming to emergency rooms for high fever, cough, malaise (general illness), and sore throat. Hospital admissions associated with the flu have increased especially in persons born before 1960. Those persons are at risk for more severe disease, with approximately 3 out of 4 of those hospitalized born before 1957.

The single best way to prevent seasonal flu is to get vaccinated each year. Last year the flu vaccine prevented over 7 million hospitalizations in the United States. Public Health officials recommend that everyone who is at least 6 months of age and older should get a flu vaccine this season. It is especially important for health care workers to get the flu vaccine as flu may be transmitted up to 3 days before symptoms start.

Greene County Combined Health District public health nurse Amy Schmitt described how she worked with local physicians to prevent early cases of the flu during the 2009 pandemic by having close family members identified and prescribed antiviral medications. She and Dr. Don Brannen, epidemiologist for both Greene and Clinton Counties, recommend the following tips to stay healthy:

- **Avoid close contact** with people who are sick. When you are sick, keep your distance from others to protect them from getting sick too. If possible, stay home from work, school, and errands when you are sick. You will help prevent others from catching your illness.

- **Cover your mouth and nose** with a tissue when coughing or sneezing, or sneeze in your elbow. It may prevent those around you from getting sick.

- **Washing your hands often** will help protect you from germs. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.
• **Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.** Germs are often spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose, or mouth.

• **Clean and disinfect** frequently touched surfaces at home, work or school, especially when someone is ill.

• **Get your flu vaccination.**

In Greene County, you can visit one of the Health District’s regular walk-in clinics, which are scheduled every Tuesday from 8:00 – 11:00 am and 12:30 – 3:00 pm, or on the second and fourth Thursday of each month from 4:00 - 6:00 pm. These clinics are first come-first serve, and wait times do vary.

The cost for each flu shot is $25.00 for adults, $20.00 for children, and $20.00 for childhood flu mist for those who are uninsured or who have an unbillable insurance. The Health District does accept Medicaid, Medicare, CareSource, and Molina, as well as some private insurances. Cards must be shown.

Greene County Combined Health District’s Health Commissioner Melissa Howell, and Clinton County Health Department’s Health Commissioner Pamela Walker-Bauer both state that to stay healthy and free of sickness “It is a good idea to practice other good health habits. Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids, and eat nutritious food.”

**No more excuses, get your flu vaccine!** Call the Greene County Combined Health District for more information at 937-374-5600.

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**Greene County Combined Health District**

*Your center for public health service and information in Greene County for over 90 years.*

*Healthy People…Healthy Communities*

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