NEW RIVER HEALTH DISTRICT OFFERS FREE SEASONAL FLU VACCINE AT DRIVE-THRU CLINIC IN FLOYD

(CHRISTIANSBURG, Virginia) – The New River Health District (NRHD) will offer free seasonal flu vaccine at a special drive-thru dispensing clinic on Thursday, October 15 from 9 a.m. to noon at the Floyd County Recreation Center Ball Field (Park Drive, off Route 8 near the Floyd town limit).

Vaccine will be available free on a first-come, first-served basis to those ages 8 and up. Be sure to wear clothing that is loose around the arm so that a public health nurse can administer the flu shot in the upper arm, and so you will not have to leave the comfort and convenience of your car. The purpose of this dispensing clinic is to simulate mass vaccination events in which the health department and local agencies would work together so community members could be vaccinated efficiently during a time of emergency.

Influenza, commonly called “the flu,” is a serious disease caused by the influenza virus that affects the respiratory tract. It is highly contagious and generally spreads from person-to-person when an infected person coughs or sneezes. The virus can be transmitted even before flu-like symptoms appear. A person usually becomes sick one to three days following exposure to the virus. Typical flu symptoms include fever, dry cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, headache, muscle aches and extreme fatigue.

“Vaccination is the best way to prevent influenza and its potentially severe complications. This unique ‘drive-thru’ approach is proven to be a fast and efficient way to vaccinate a large number of folks in a short time,” said Noelle Bissell, M.D., director, New River Health District. “Community immunity develops when more people get vaccinated,” Dr. Bissell explained. “There is less virus present to potentially infect those who cannot be immunized such as infants under 6 months old; this helps protect everyone from this potentially deadly disease. It is particularly important to get a flu shot this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the possibility of both viruses being in our communities at the same time.”

“The timing and duration of flu seasons vary - they can occur from early fall to late spring. Receiving an annual seasonal flu vaccine is the best way to reduce your risk of becoming sick with the flu and spreading the virus to others. When more people get vaccinated, less flu can spread through the community. It takes up to two weeks to develop the vaccine’s full protection,” said Dr. Bissell.

All persons aged 6 months or older should be vaccinated against influenza each year. Particular effort should be made to vaccinate people at higher risk for influenza complications, including:

- Pregnant and postpartum women, or those who will be pregnant during the influenza season;
- Persons over 65 years of age, including residents of nursing homes and long-term care facilities;
- People who have chronic lung or heart problems, including asthma; and
- People who have other serious medical conditions, such as diabetes, kidney disease, cystic fibrosis, anemia, cancer, weak immune systems (including those with HIV) or a seizure disorder.

(More)
To help prevent the spread of influenza to people in high risk groups, those who live with people in a high risk group and healthcare workers should also receive an annual influenza vaccine. Travelers to countries outside of the U.S. may also need to consider influenza vaccination, even at different times of the year.

The CDC estimates that each year over the last decade, influenza has caused 9 to 45 million illnesses, 140,000 to 810,000 hospitalizations and 12,000 to 61,000 deaths.

To minimize your risk of contracting or transmitting the flu, follow these simple steps:
- Get vaccinated;
- Wear a cloth face covering, or mask;
- Wash your hands frequently and thoroughly, for at least 20 seconds;
- Cover your cough, either by using a disposable tissue or coughing into your sleeve, not your hand; and
- Stay at home when you are sick.

A drive-thru flu vaccine clinic was held September 25 in Radford, dispensing more than 350 vaccines. A drive-thru clinic is scheduled for October 14 at Blacksburg High School, and planning is underway for clinics in Pulaski and Giles counties.

For more information, call the New River Health District at 540-585-3300 or visit https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/flu/.