Minimize Your Risk of Getting the Flu

Norristown, PA (September 14, 2012) – The 2012-2013 flu season is just around the corner and the Montgomery County Health Department is gearing up to offer this year’s flu vaccine at clinics throughout the county.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that everyone 6 months of age and older get their yearly flu vaccine as soon as vaccines become available in their community. Vaccination is the best way to prevent influenza and its potentially severe complications.

It’s a good idea to get the vaccine as soon as it’s available. It takes about two weeks after vaccination for antibodies to develop in the body and provide protection against the flu, and then the benefits last for up to a year. The flu vaccine is needed every year because flu viruses are constantly changing. It’s not unusual for new flu viruses to appear each year. The flu vaccine is formulated each year to keep up with the flu viruses as they change.

The flu clinics are designed to allow people to be able to get in and out quickly. All clinics will be held from 10am to 1pm, except the clinic at the Upper Merion site, which will be held from 3pm to 6pm. Residents who are Medicare eligible should bring their Medicare card.

Below are the clinic dates and locations:

- Saturday, September 29, Upper Perkiomen High School, 2 Walt Road, Pennsburg
- Thursday, October 4, Norristown Public Library, 1001 Powell Street, Norristown
- Thursday, October 11, Congregation Beth Or, 239 Welsh Road, Maple Glen
- Saturday, October 13, Montgomery County Community College, 340 DeKalb Pike, Blue Bell
- Tuesday, October 16, Upper Merion Township Building, 175 West Valley Forge Road, King of Prussia
The shots are free for Montgomery County residents. The Health Department will continue to vaccinate residents throughout the winter, or as long as they have the vaccine available.

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.

According to the CDC, each year in the United States approximately 200,000 people are hospitalized due to flu illness; and flu-related deaths range from 3,000 to 49,000 each year, averaging 24,000 over the last three decades.

To minimize your risk of contracting flu, follow these simple steps:

- Get vaccinated;
- Wash your hands frequently and thoroughly;
- Cough or sneeze into your sleeve, not your hand; and
- Minimize contact with sick people if you’re well, and with well people if you’re sick.

Helpful websites for complete and up-to-date influenza information include: [www.cdc.gov/flu](http://www.cdc.gov/flu), [www.flu.gov](http://www.flu.gov) and [www.health.state.pa.us](http://www.health.state.pa.us).

You can also find information about the flu on the Health Department website at [www.health.montcopa.org](http://www.health.montcopa.org) or by calling the Health Department at 610-278-5117.