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**For Immediate Release**  
**October 13, 2006**

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## **CITY WORKING TO IMMUNIZE OLDER ADULTS & YOUNG CHILDREN**

### **CITY OF MILWAUKEE HEALTH DEPARTMENT LAUNCHES “WINTERIZE-IMMUNIZE”**

#### **ANNUAL INFLUENZA AND PNEUMOCOCCAL IMMUNIZATIONS CAMPAIGN**

Mayor Tom Barrett and Commissioner of Health Bevan K. Baker, CHE will once again launch the City of Milwaukee Health Department's (MHD) annual "Winterize-Immunize" influenza vaccination campaign on Tuesday, October 17<sup>th</sup> at the Clinton Rose Senior Center at 12:30 p.m. The event will kick off MHD's yearly influenza and pneumococcal marketing campaign. The kick-off will be held in conjunction with the Visiting Nurse Association (VNA) immunization clinic. VNA nurses will provide flu and pneumococcal vaccinations from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Despite the availability of inexpensive vaccines, each year five to twenty percent of Americans continue to suffer from influenza, a very common but highly infectious respiratory illness. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that influenza and its complications are responsible for over 36,000 fatalities across the US each year, and more than 200,000 hospitalizations. Seniors age 65 and over account for over 90% of flu-related deaths and over half of the hospitalizations.

The MHD stresses that the single-most effective action anyone can take to reduce his or her chances of getting the flu is to get vaccinated. For the 2006-07 flu season, five influenza vaccines are licensed for use in the US, with an expected total of up to 115 million doses. This total represents a larger US influenza vaccine supply than previous flu seasons. No vaccine shortages or delays are anticipated.

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Perhaps the most significant change in the CDC's recommendations for this season is that all children 6 to 59 months of age should receive an annual influenza vaccination. Children in this age group are at increased risk for severe influenza-related complications or hospitalization. The CDC recommends an annual influenza vaccination for the following groups:

- Children aged 6–59 months of age
- All persons 50 years of age and older
- Persons of any age with chronic medical conditions
- Women who will become pregnant at anytime during flu season
- Residents of nursing homes and other long-term care facilities
- Household contacts of persons at high risk for complications from the flu
- Household contacts and out-of-home caregivers of children under 6 months of age
- Health care workers

Pro-active measures you can follow to avoid the flu this season:

- Wash your hands frequently and use alcohol-based hand sanitizers
- Cover all coughs and sneezes with tissue
- Avoid other people who are sick
- Stay home if you become sick yourself

Pneumococcal disease continues to pose a serious threat to older adults and young children. It is the most common cause of vaccine- preventable death in the US and the most likely cause of bacterial meningitis in infants and young children. There are two types of pneumococcal vaccine available. The CDC recommends that all seniors receive a pneumococcal polysaccharide vaccination at age 65, and young children under 3 years of age receive the pneumococcal conjugate series. Both vaccines are available throughout the year.

The City of Milwaukee Health Department encourages all health care providers and families to spread the message about immunizations to at-risk older adults and young children.

For more information, please contact the City of Milwaukee Health Department at 286-3616 or visit any of the following websites:

<http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/immunization/readii.htm>

<http://www.cdc.gov/nip/specint/readii/default.htm>

<http://www.milwaukee.gov/health>