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## **National Influenza Vaccination Week** Aims to Protect Communities

As we approach the holiday season, Northern Michigan Public Health Alliance (NMPHA) and Benzie-Leelanau District Health Department (BLDHD) is joining the nation in observing National Influenza Vaccination Week from December 4<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup>. This annual event serves as a reminder of the critical importance of influenza vaccination in safeguarding public health.

Influenza, commonly known as the respiratory flu, poses a significant threat to public health every year. The virus can lead to severe illness, hospitalization, and even death, particularly for vulnerable populations such as young children, the elderly, and those with underlying health conditions. By getting vaccinated, individuals not only protect themselves but also contribute to the overall immunity of the community.

“National Influenza Vaccination Week serves as a powerful reminder of the lifesaving benefits of vaccination,” said Dr. Joshua Meyerson, Medical Director. “By taking this simple step, we can collectively reduce the impact of influenza on our community.”

This year’s campaign emphasizes the following key messages:

- **Early Vaccination:** Getting vaccinated early in the season is crucial for building immunity before the flu virus becomes widespread. BLDHD encourages everyone, six months of age and older, to get their flu shot.
- **Community Protection:** Achieving high vaccination rates is essential to create a protective shield around our communities. By getting vaccinated, individuals play a vital role in preventing the spread of the flu.
- **Accessibility:** BLDHD has taken steps to ensure accessibility and availability of flu vaccines. This includes schools, nursing homes, and community clinics. For additional locations, visit [vaccinefinder.gov](http://vaccinefinder.gov).
- **Special Considerations for High-Risk Groups:** Those at higher risk for complications from the flu, including young children, pregnant women, the elderly, and individuals with chronic health conditions, are strongly encouraged to receive the vaccine.
- **Combating COVID-19 and Influenza:** With both the flu and COVID-19 potentially impacting communities simultaneously, vaccination against both viruses is crucial. BLDHD emphasizes the importance of receiving both vaccinations for comprehensive protection.

For more information on where to get vaccinated and additional resources on influenza prevention, visit [www.bldhd.org](http://www.bldhd.org) or call 231-256-0200 ext. 3.

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