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Licking County Health Department

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To: All Local Media

From: R. Joseph Ebel RS,MS, MBA
Health Commissioner

Subject: Pneumococcal Vaccine

The Licking County Health Department has received a shipment of pneumococcal vaccine. This vaccine protects against pneumococcal disease caused by *Streptococcus pneumoniae* bacteria. Pneumonia is the primary cause of death as a secondary infection for persons contracting influenza. With the current concern for surges in H1N1 and seasonal flu cases, now would be a good time to get pneumococcal vaccine.

Anyone can get pneumococcal disease, but some people are at greater risk than others. At risk individuals include people 65 years and older, the very young, people with certain health problems (damaged spleen or no spleen, cancer, kidney disease, asthma, organ transplant, chemotherapy recipients, diabetics, heart or lung disease, long term steroid therapy, alcoholism, HIV or AIDS), people with a weakened immune system, and people who smoke tobacco. Seventy million people in the United States are candidates for receiving the pneumococcal vaccine but have neglected or were unaware they needed this protection.

A single dose of Pneumococcal vaccine is recommended for anyone 65 years of age and older. If a dose was given prior to age 65 because of health problems, a second dose may be administered a minimum of 5 years later and/or when the person is 65 years or older. A child over the age of two with a qualifying illness also qualifies with a physician's prescription.

Medicare and/or Medicaid will cover the cost of the vaccine. For those not covered by Medicare, there is a \$25 charge if able to pay. Those under age 65 need to present a prescription from their physician identifying their illness to receive this vaccine.

For available clinics or questions, please contact the Licking County Health Department at 740-349-6535 or check their web site www.lickingcohealth.org

