

**GEORGE LATIMER, Westchester County Executive**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**COUNTY EXECUTIVE GEORGE LATIMER AND HEALTH COMMISSIONER REMINDS  
RESIDENTS WHAT TO DO TO AVOID AND TREAT THE FLU**

**Get a Flu Shot, Wash Hands Frequently, Stay Home When Sick and  
Clean Surfaces with Bleach to Stop Spread of Germs**

Photos attached

[Public service announcement link](#)

[News conference video link](#)

With flu widespread throughout the state and nation, Westchester County Executive George Latimer rolled up his sleeve for a flu shot today at the Westchester County Health Department clinic in White Plains, urging others who haven't already done so to get themselves and their children vaccinated.

"Get a flu shot and make sure your family members do, too," Latimer said. "The vaccine can help keep you healthy or reduce the severity of your symptoms if you do get the flu. It's our best defense and flu shots remain widely available."

To increase access to flu shots for children, pharmacists statewide are now allowed to administer flu vaccines to children ages 2 to 18, following an executive order issued Friday by Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo. Parents should check for availability with their local pharmacy. Flu vaccines also are offered at supermarkets, doctors' offices and by appointment at the Westchester County Department of Health clinics in White Plains and Yonkers. Call (914) 995-5800 to schedule flu shot with the health department. To find a flu vaccine at a pharmacy or clinic near you, go to [www.westchestergov.com/health](http://www.westchestergov.com/health).

"Getting an annual flu vaccine is the best protection we have against flu deaths in every age group," said Sherlita Amler, MD, Commissioner of Health. "While Westchester has had no pediatric flu deaths so far this season, 37 children across the U.S. have died. And as the CDC has pointed out, this year, Baby Boomers ages 50 to 64 are being hospitalized for flu at greater rates than young children, so really everyone should take this seriously and get a flu shot. If protecting yourself isn't reason enough, the vaccine also can protect infants, young children and seniors, all of whom are much more vulnerable to flu complications."

**More**

Westchester typically experiences roughly 90,000 cases of influenza during the flu season, which runs from October to as late as May. The latest figures show influenza levels are widespread statewide, with 8.58 percent of doctors' visits attributed to flu, according to the New York State Department of Health. In New York, it is typical at this time of year for 3.1% of doctors' visits to be attributed to the flu.

Flu symptoms include fever, body aches, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, headache, chills and fatigue. Residents with these symptoms should contact their healthcare provider, who may prescribe medication that can shorten symptom duration.

To avoid the flu and other viruses, wash your hands with soap and water before and after using the toilet, blowing your nose, preparing or eating food. Wet your hands, work up a lather, and scrub the back of your hands, between your fingers and under your nails; then rinse and dry.

“Wash your hands thoroughly for about 20 seconds – the amount of time it takes to sing the A-B-Cs or to sing the Happy Birthday song twice,” Amler said.

Until they are well, people who are ill should stay home and avoid visits to newborns or family members in hospitals, nursing homes, hospices or assisted living facilities, Amler said. People in these settings are often at increased risk for complications and viruses spread easily there.

If you have a family member home sick with the flu or another virus, hand hygiene and frequent cleaning are critical for your whole household. Environmentally friendly cleaning products often aren't strong enough to kill germs, Amler said. Instead, clean high-touch hard surfaces with a bleach solution. Add a tablespoon of bleach to a gallon of water. Pour this into a labeled spray bottle and use it to clean countertops and tables, railings and door knobs, but don't use on upholstered furniture. When you are sick, try to avoid preparing food for others and don't share utensils.

“Keep your distance from people who are sick because flu virus spreads through the air when a sick person breathes, speaks or coughs,” Amler said. “When you have a fever, stay home to avoid spreading your illness to others until you are fever-free without medication for at least 24 hours.”

For more information, contact the Westchester County Department of Health at (914) 813-5000 or visit our website at [www.westchestergov.com/health](http://www.westchestergov.com/health). You can also follow us on Twitter @wchealthdept or like us on Facebook at Facebook.com/wchealthdept.

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