**2012 FLU SEASON INFORMATION**

Getting the flu vaccine is the single best way to protect against the flu. Last year, thousands of Virginians protected themselves and their loved ones with a flu vaccination. Everyone over the age of six months should be vaccinated as the flu season approaches. Even healthy people can get the flu and it can be serious. Getting the flu vaccine could keep you from losing valuable time from work, your child from missing valuable time from school, and could even save your life.

To learn more about being vaccinated, check with the Portsmouth Health Department (393-8585), your doctor, or your pharmacy.

**Who Should Get the Seasonal Flu Vaccine? Everyone**! The CDC recommends all people 6 months and older get the annual flu vaccination.

**What are symptoms of the flu?**

* Fever or chills
* Cough
* Sore throat
* Runny or stuffy nose
* Muscle or body aches
* Headaches
* Fatigue (tiredness)
* Vomiting and diarrhea, though this is more common in children than adults.

**What if you think you or your child has the flu?**

* Stay home if you are ill and keep your child home from school if they are ill.
* Rest and drink lots of fluids.
* Antibiotics will not help a person recover from the flu, because flu is caused by a virus, not by bacteria.
* Children often need help keeping their fever under control. Follow your child’s doctor’s instructions.
* Children with asthma and other lung disease, diabetes, heart disease, weakened immune systems, and neurological or neurodevelopmental conditions can have complications with the flu so consult your doctor about appropriate care.
* Take your child to the doctor or the emergency room if he or she:
  + Breathes rapidly or with difficulty
  + Has bluish skin color
  + Does not drink enough and becomes dehydrated
  + Does not wake up or interact with others
  + Is so irritable that he or she doesn't want to be held, or
  + Gets better only to become sick again, with fever and a more severe cough
* If you are concerned that something does not seem right with your child, call your doctor.

**Will new flu viruses circulate this season?**

This summer there have been several clusters of a new variant of human flu illness (H3N2v) following exposure to pigs, mostly at agricultural fairs. The symptoms of H3N2v infection are similar to those of seasonal flu viruses. The virus is thought to spread the same way as seasonal flu but from pig to person; mainly through infected droplets created when an infected pig coughs or sneezes. If these droplets land in your nose or mouth, or you inhale them, you can be infected.

You cannot get sick with this flu from eating pork.

What can you do to prevent getting sick with H3N2v? If you are planning on attending a fair where pigs will be present:

**CDC Recommendations for People with High Risk Factors:**

* Anyone who is at high risk of serious flu complications planning to attend a fair where pigs will be present should avoid pigs and swine barns at the fair this year.
* People who are at high risk of serious flu complications include children younger than 5 years, people 65 years and older, pregnant women, and people with certain long-term health conditions (like asthma and other lung disease, diabetes, heart disease, weakened immune systems, and neurological or neurodevelopmental conditions).

**CDC Recommendations for People Not at High Risk:**

* Don’t take food or drink into pig areas; don’t eat, drink or put anything in your mouth in pig areas.
* Don’t take toys, pacifiers, cups, baby bottles, strollers, or similar items into pig areas.
* Avoid close contact with pigs that look or act ill.
* Take protective measures if you must come in contact with pigs that are known or suspected to be sick. This includes minimizing contact with pigs and wearing personal protective equipment like protective clothing and gloves and masks that cover your mouth and nose when contact is required.
* Wash your hands often with soap and running water before and after exposure to pigs. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.
* To further reduce the risk of infection, minimize contact with pigs and swine barns.
* Watch your pig (if you have one) for illness. Call a veterinarian if you suspect illness.
* Avoid contact with pigs if you have flu-like symptoms. Wait 7 days after your illness started or until you have been without fever for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications, whichever is longer. If you must have contact with pigs while you are sick, take the protective actions listed above.

People with high risk factors who have pig exposure, including having attended a fair where pigs are present, and develop flu symptoms, should call a health care provider. Tell them about your exposure and your high risk factor. Seasonal flu vaccine will not protect against H3N2v, but prescription influenza antiviral drugs can treat H3N2v illness in people.