



News Release

For Immediate Release
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Utah Department of Health Stages Mock Influenza Event “Don’t Get Bugged”

(Salt Lake City, UT) – Utah Department of Health (UDOH) employees covered with red dots drew attention to a mock influenza outbreak during a "Don’t Get Bugged" event on November 28, 2007. Dr. David Sundwall, UDOH executive director, recognized National Influenza Vaccination Week, November 25 – December 1, 2007, to increase awareness about influenza vaccination. He was joined by members of the Utah Adult Immunization Coalition (UAIC) and Lisa Wyman, UDOH Epidemiologist, who addressed current influenza trends.

"Vaccination should continue throughout the season, even into March," said Dr. Sundwall.

"Often, vaccination falls off significantly after Thanksgiving. But influenza may not peak until after January and the vaccine still provides protection during those periods of increased activity," he added.

Influenza vaccine is available and recommended for all age groups - from infants to seniors. Public health officials encourage everyone who wants to reduce their risk for influenza to be vaccinated. Vaccination can reduce the chances of getting influenza by 70 to 90 percent in healthy adults, when the vaccine strains and the virus strains are well-matched.

In 2006, 72.1 percent of non-institutionalized Utah adults age 65 years and older received the annual influenza vaccination, placing Utah above the national average of 69.6 percent. That same year, 36.9 percent of Utah children age 6 to 23 months received at least one dose and 24.2 percent received two doses, as recommended by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) for the first influenza season these children were vaccinated. Nationally, only 31.9 percent of children age 6 to 23 months received at least one dose of influenza vaccine and only 20.6 percent were fully vaccinated with two doses.

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Nationally, about five to 20 percent of people will get influenza each year. An average of 36,000 people in the United States die from influenza each year, and more than 200,000 people are hospitalized yearly as a result of influenza-associated infections. Additionally, a 2004 study conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) found that the number of influenza-related hospitalizations in the United States is increasing each year.

Utah reported 238 influenza-associated hospitalizations during the 2006-2007 influenza season. Most of those cases occurred in children under five years of age, compared to the 2005-2006 season, where most of the 502 hospitalized cases occurred in adults age 65 years and older.

Influenza information and weekly updates are available on the UDOH Influenza Web page at health.utah.gov/epi/diseases/flu/index1.htm. To find an influenza vaccination clinic in Utah, visit the Flu Vaccine Locator at www.immunize-utah.org or call the Utah Immunization Hotline at 1-800-275-0659.

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The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public's health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death, assuring access to affordable, quality health care, and promoting healthy lifestyles.