



News Release

For Immediate Release

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2008-2009 Influenza Vaccine Available

Salt Lake City, UT – The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) confirms there will be more influenza vaccine for the 2008-2009 season than in previous years, with an estimated 146 million doses available.

Beginning with the 2008-2009 influenza season, all children ages 6 months through 18 years should be vaccinated against influenza annually. Previous recommendations focused on children up to five years of age.

Public health officials say influenza can have significant impacts among school-aged children and their contacts (e.g., school absenteeism, increased antibiotic use, medical care visits, and parental work loss). Broadening the recommended age ranges for child vaccination will greatly improve coverage levels and reduce illness.

Two types of influenza vaccine are available: injectable (flu shot) and the nasal spray (FluMist). FluMist is recommended for healthy, non-pregnant individuals two to 49 years of age. Both types of influenza vaccine contain three new virus strains (*A/Brisbane/59/2007 (H1N1)-like, A/Brisbane/10/2007 (H3N2)-like, and B/Florida/4/2006-like*) that are responsible for the majority of influenza illnesses this season. Individuals should check with their health care provider to determine which vaccine is best for them.

“The flu vaccine can greatly reduce the risk of people getting seriously ill with the flu,” says Robert Rolfs, MD, State Epidemiologist. “In addition to getting vaccinated, there are other measures that can also reduce the risk of spreading or getting the flu—*but only if people actually practice them.*” These measures include:

- Covering your mouth and nose with a disposable tissue when you cough or sneeze and throwing the tissue away
- Coughing into your elbow
- Washing your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds multiple times daily

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- Staying at home when you are sick to avoid spreading viruses to others in the workplace or school.

Rolfs also cautions against using antibiotics which are not effective against influenza. Only certain anti-viral medications are effective, if given within two days of exposure. Misusing antibiotics can lead to stronger, more resistant bugs. Individuals who think they may have the flu should talk with their health care provider before taking medications.

The Utah Department of Health (UDOH) encourages vaccination for anyone who wants to reduce the risk of getting the flu or spreading it to others. Vaccination should continue throughout the influenza season, from October until May.

While all individuals may receive the vaccine, the UDOH and CDC encourage certain high-risk groups to get vaccinated as soon as vaccine is available. These groups include: the elderly; young children; health care workers; immune-compromised individuals; residents in long-term care facilities; pregnant women; those who live in households with high-risk individuals; and those with kidney, lung or heart disease.

“Vaccination is particularly important for breastfeeding and pregnant women,” says Lynn Martinez with the UDOH Pregnancy Risk Line. “They are at higher risk for developing complications from influenza and also have contact with infants and children under five years of age, who are more likely to require medical care or hospitalization if infected,” she added. The CDC and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists recommends all pregnant women or women who will be pregnant during influenza season receive the inactivated influenza vaccine, not the live virus vaccine. Breastfeeding women may receive either the live virus vaccine or the inactivated influenza vaccine.

Utah influenza information and weekly seasonal influenza activity updates are available every Wednesday at 1:00 p.m. on the UDOH Influenza Web page at www.health.utah.gov/flu. To find an influenza vaccination clinic in Utah, visit the Flu Clinic Locator at www.immunize-utah.org or call the Utah Immunization Hotline at 1-800-275-0659.

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