



For Immediate Release
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News Release

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Vaccinate Early Against Seasonal Influenza

Salt Lake City, UT – Seasonal influenza vaccinations are now available at clinics throughout the state and the Utah Department of Health (UDOH) is encouraging Utahns to get vaccinated as soon as possible.

Due to last spring's outbreak of the novel H1N1 influenza strain and the vaccine for it that's expected to be ready in late October, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is recommending health departments begin vaccination efforts for *seasonal* influenza early, to allow health departments to better focus on providing the novel H1N1 vaccine when it arrives.

UDOH Executive Director Dr. David Sundwall says, "While the focus since spring of 2009 has been on the novel H1N1 influenza virus, it is the seasonal virus that traditionally causes widespread illness during the fall and winter." The seasonal vaccine covers three influenza viruses that are expected to show up in North America this fall and winter, and is the single best step toward protecting yourself and your loved ones. Dr. Sundwall adds, "It is important to note that the protection you get from the seasonal vaccine will not wear off before the influenza season is over." Utah health care providers are advised to administer the vaccine for seasonal influenza as soon as they receive it.

While there are no priority groups for the seasonal influenza vaccine, certain groups are at greater risk from illness and should be vaccinated as soon as possible. Annual vaccination against influenza is recommended for adults and children, especially those at higher risk for influenza complications and those who are close contacts of persons at higher risk. Higher risk individuals include those with heart disease, diabetes, respiratory problems such as asthma, or immune deficiencies. In addition, health care workers, persons who care for children, and residents of nursing homes and other long-term care facilities should get

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vaccinated. Women who are pregnant or anticipate being pregnant during the influenza season should also receive the seasonal influenza vaccine.

Two types of seasonal influenza vaccine are available: injectable (flu shot) and nasal spray (FluMist). FluMist is recommended for healthy, non-pregnant individuals two to 49 years of age. Both types of seasonal influenza vaccine contain three new virus strains that are anticipated to be responsible for the majority of non-H1N1 influenza illnesses this season. Individuals should check with their health care provider to determine which vaccine is best for them. The seasonal influenza vaccine will not protect you from the novel H1N1 influenza.

In addition to getting vaccinated, there are other measures that can also reduce the risk of getting or spreading the flu. 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
- Staying at home when you are sick to avoid spreading viruses to others in the workplace or school.

Utah influenza information and influenza activity updates are available at www.health.utah.gov/flu and will be updated on Wednesdays at 1:00 p.m. 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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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.