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NEWS RELEASE

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Three Idahoans Die from Flu-Related Illnesses

The deaths of three Idaho residents who died from flu-related illnesses were reported to the Idaho Division of Health this week. These deaths were reported from three different regions of the state; the greater Treasure Valley, south-central and eastern Idaho. The individuals who died were all adults in their 40s and older.

“Our hearts go out to the families of these individuals,” says Dr. Christine Hahn M.D, state epidemiologist. “Flu activity is still on the rise in Idaho and the nation. It is important to remember that it is not too late to get the flu shot. This is the best defense against the flu, which can cause severe illness.”

A record amount of flu vaccine was produced for this influenza season, with district health departments and local health care providers reporting an ample supply for people who would still like to receive this protection. Along with the vaccine, people also can protect themselves and prevent infection by following these preventive measures:

1. Wash your hands frequently and thoroughly, especially after visiting public places and before eating.
2. Cover your cough by coughing into your shirt sleeve at your elbow.
3. If you are sick, stay home from work or school so you do not infect others.

(more)

Dr. Hahn says that several school closures related to the flu and other infectious diseases have recently been reported. Although most serious illnesses from the flu are in people over the age of 50, she cautions people of all ages to take precautions and be vigilant, for the flu can cause serious health consequences in all age groups.

“People should be alert to the symptoms of flu, which may include fever, headache, fatigue, dry cough, sore throat, nasal congestion and muscle aches,” she says. “If you have these symptoms and they are severe, call your healthcare provider.” She notes that vomiting, abdominal cramping and diarrhea are usually not symptoms of the seasonal flu. People also should consult their healthcare provider if they are experiencing severe symptoms of their digestive tract.

Dr. Hahn advises people to call their healthcare provider if they or their family members experience any of these serious symptoms that are flu-related:

- A high fever that does not respond to over-the-counter fever medications such as acetaminophen, commonly found in Tylenol; or ibuprofen, the main ingredient of Advil. This could signal a more serious infection. **Do not give aspirin to children or adolescents who are sick with flu or who have a fever**, or medications containing salicylates, such as some medications used for nausea, vomiting and diarrhea;
- A fever from the flu usually lasts three to five days. If the fever lasts longer than this, or returns, call your health care provider;
- Poor fluid intake can lead to dehydration, which can be very serious in young children. Prolonged diarrhea can also lead to dehydration. Call your doctor if your child is not drinking fluids or not keeping fluids down.; and
- Flu is a respiratory disease that can infect the lungs. If a family member has difficulty breathing, exhibits fast, hard breathing, or has bluish lips, call your doctor immediately.

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(Editors: For more information please contact your District Health Department Public Information Officer or Tom Shanahan, Public Information Officer for the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare, 334-0668.)