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News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SWDH ANNOUNCES FLU-RELATED DEATH

It is not too late to get your flu vaccination

Southwest District Health officials announced an influenza-associated death of a female, over 70, from Payette County. In October, flu-related deaths were also reported in Ada and Kootenai Counties.

“We are fortunate Idaho’s flu season is off to a slow start, but that is no reason to skip your flu vaccination,” said Jennifer Tripp, Program Manager for Southwest District Health. “Many people with influenza recover after a few days of discomfort, but some people develop serious complications. Every year in the U.S. there are between 3,000 and 49,000 flu-associated deaths. This unfortunate incident serves as a gentle reminder to get vaccinated as soon as possible,” she said.

The flu is a respiratory illness caused by the influenza virus and easily passed from person to person. It is primarily transmitted by the sneeze or cough of an infected person or by contact with contaminated surfaces. Typical flu symptoms include fever, head & body aches, fatigue, cough, and sometimes a sore throat and runny nose.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends a flu vaccination for everyone six months of age and older. An annual flu vaccination is the first and most important step in protecting against flu and its potentially serious complications—especially for those who are at greater risk for serious illness. People at high risk include people with chronic underlying medical conditions such as asthma, diabetes, heart disease, or neurological conditions; pregnant women; those younger than five years or older than 65 years of age; or anyone with a weakened immune system. A full list of high risk factors is available at http://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/disease/high_risk.htm.

Tripp says it takes about two weeks after vaccination for the body’s immune system to fully respond. Some children six months through eight years of age, who are getting vaccinated for the first time, may require two doses of flu vaccine to be fully protected. The second dose should be given at least 28 days after the first dose.

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In addition to getting vaccinated, Tripp suggests taking everyday preventive actions to protect you and your family during flu season.

These include:

- Wash your hands often. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.
- Stay home when you are sick. Keep your distance from others to protect them from also getting sick. In turn, avoid people who may be sneezing or coughing. After visiting public places, avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth until you have washed your hands.
- Cover your nose and mouth when sneezing or coughing and avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Do not share eating utensils, drinking glasses, towels or other personal items.
- Refrain from visiting a nursing home if you have flu like symptoms.
- Get plenty of rest, exercise, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids, and eat nutritious foods.

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