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NEWS RELEASE

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Public Health Officials Urge Community Support to Prioritize Flu Vaccinations

The Department of Health and Welfare and Idaho's District Health Departments are asking for the support of the general public and the medical community on the revised flu vaccine recommendations released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

On Tuesday afternoon, the CDC announced that approximately one-half of this season's flu vaccine would not be available because of a manufacturing problem. Because of the reduced supply, public health officials in Idaho are asking healthy people between the ages of 2-64 years to defer receiving an influenza vaccine at this time. "We anticipate we will not have enough flu vaccine for everyone who may want to be vaccinated this year," says Dr. Christine Hahn, Idaho State Epidemiologist. "It is very important for all of us to make sure vulnerable people in our communities receive an influenza vaccination first."

The CDC recommends the following people receive the flu vaccine this year:

- All children aged 6–23 months;
- Adults aged 65 years and older;
- Persons aged 2–64 years with underlying chronic medical conditions;
- All women who will be pregnant during the influenza season;
- Residents of nursing homes and long-term care facilities;
- Children aged 6 months–18 years on chronic aspirin therapy;
- Health-care workers involved in direct patient care; and
- Out-of-home caregivers and household contacts of children less than 6 months old.

Dr. Hahn advises people who fall into any of these categories to receive the vaccine. If your healthcare provider does not have vaccine available, she recommends you contact the health districts or other healthcare providers. "The good news out of Tuesday's announcement is that none of the vaccine for 6-23 month olds was affected by the manufacturing problem," she says. "Healthcare providers participating in the state's Vaccine For Children program will receive their normal supply of vaccine for our toddlers."

(more)

People who do not receive the flu vaccine this year can take preventive measures to protect their health.

Dr. Hahn advises people to:

- Wash your hands often, especially before eating or after being out in the public, and avoid wiping your eyes with your fingers;
- Stay home from work or school if you are sick;
- Cover your mouth if you are sniffing, sneezing or coughing, wash your hands often and dispose of tissues used;
- Do not share eating utensils, drinking glasses, towels or other personal items;
- Refrain from visiting a nursing home if you have a cough or respiratory illness;
- Avoid people who may be sneezing or coughing. After visiting public places, avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth until you have washed your hands; and
- Get plenty of rest, exercise and eat healthy foods.

“Most healthy people under the age of 65 who contract the flu will get better on their own after a few days of sickness,” she says. “Our concern is for people who could suffer severe health consequences from catching the flu. All of us can do our part to protect people in our communities who could be vulnerable.”

For more information about the flu, please visit the CDC website at www.cdc.gov/flu/. The American Lung Association sponsors a helpful flu clinic locator on their website at www.findaflushot.com/. For additional local information, please contact your District Health Department.

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