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Adults Don't Outgrow The Need For Immunizations – The Need Grows With Age

(Salt Lake City, UT) — Many adults may believe that immunizations are only needed to keep children healthy, but vaccinations are a simple and cost-effective way to prevent serious illnesses and death in adults, especially the elderly and those with chronic diseases. More than 90 percent of deaths attributed to influenza or pneumonia occurred among persons 65 years of age or older, particularly those with chronic conditions. Immunizations of the elderly can reduce hospitalizations for pneumonia and influenza by 20 to 70 percent and death by approximately 85 percent. Vaccines are one of the most effective health intervention tools available and can prevent serious and sometimes fatal effects of infectious diseases.

Utah's Lt. Governor Olene Walker today kicks off National Adult Immunization Awareness Week during the **Senior Expo 2000** to be held **October 10 at the Salt Palace** from 8 a.m. until 8 p.m. Walker will be presented with Utah's first Adult Immunization Record card that will help adults keep track of important immunizations. Children have had these tracking cards and it has become apparent that adults need them as well. The cards also have areas to record blood pressure, cancer screenings, cholesterol test results as well as important physician phone numbers. The free cards will be available during the Senior Expo near the adult flu and pneumonia vaccinations for those 65 years of age and older. (A limited supply will be available on a first-come, first-served basis. The shots cost \$9 or Medicare Part B card can be billed.)

To further increase awareness about adult immunizations and improve adult immunization levels, the Utah Adult Immunization Coalition (UAIC) was formed. The UAIC developed the first Adult Immunization Record card through partnerships with public and private agencies

- More -

Page 2 of 2 - Adults Don't Outgrow the Need For Immunizations – the Need Grows With Them

such as HealthInsight, Intermountain Health Care, Utah Department of Health, senior aging services, public health departments, pharmaceutical companies, religious organizations and others.

The immunizations that adults need are available for diseases including tetanus, diphtheria, hepatitis A and B, measles, mumps, rubella, chickenpox, pneumonia and influenza. However, due to nationwide delays in vaccine shipments this year, limited amounts of the influenza vaccine will be available during October. The UAIC and the Utah Department of Health urges all health care providers to first vaccinate individuals at highest risk of developing complications from influenza, which is often the young and old. Large-scale vaccination clinics will not begin until mid-November and may continue into January.

Together, influenza and pneumonia is the fifth leading cause of death in the United States. As many as 50,000 to 70,000 adults die annually from diseases or their complications that can be easily prevented by effective vaccines. Particularly at risk of infection for influenza and pneumonia are those individuals with chronic medical conditions such as diabetes, asthma, heart and lung disease, HIV infection, cancer, individuals undergoing immunosuppressive therapy and the elderly (>65 years). For example, people with diabetes are three times more likely to die from pneumonia or flu than people without diabetes. Influenza and complications of the illness can be prevented by an annual vaccination, usually given in the fall. Pneumonia and its complications can be reduced with the pneumonia vaccine, generally given only once during a person's lifetime.

For more information about adult immunizations, contact your health care provider, the Utah Immunization Hotline at 1-800-275-0659 or the Utah Health Resource Line at 1-888-222-2542.

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