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News Release

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Influenza Vaccine Delay May Cause UDOH to Restructure Vaccine Recommendations

(Salt Lake City, UT) - The Utah Department of Health (UDOH) has been notified by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) to expect a delay in shipment of the influenza vaccine for the 2000-2001 season. It is also possible that there will be a reduction of influenza vaccine. For recommended populations the vaccine is usually given starting in October; but this year the vaccine supply may not be available until November. Health departments nationwide have been notified of the shipment delay.

The expected delay is caused by a technical problem growing this year's strains of the virus during the vaccine manufacturing process. Influenza vaccine suppliers have assured the FDA and the CDC that vaccine will be available for those at highest risk of complications from influenza. If a substantial shortfall occurs, the CDC and its Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices would provide modified recommendations which will emphasize vaccinating only those at highest risk of death from influenza.

"We expect to be issuing regular updates on this over the next several weeks. For now, we are notifying health care providers and the public of the potential for flu vaccine delays and modified recommendations," says Scott Williams, M.D., Deputy Director of the UDOH.

As we near the traditional flu vaccination season, recommendations will be updated by the UDOH with feedback from the Utah Adult Immunization Coalition. More information is expected from the CDC in the next few weeks. Those who do not have the following conditions may be asked to voluntarily wait until the vaccine is administered to those who are more likely to develop life-threatening complications from influenza. Recommendations at this time include giving priority access to the vaccine for the following high-risk groups:

- ◆ Those suffering from a chronic illness such as lung or heart disease and diabetes
- ◆ Those age 65 and over

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- ◆ Those who are immunosuppressed
- ◆ Health care providers/skilled nursing home staff/care givers

Additional recommendations include:

Those age 65 and over should get the pneumonia vaccine. For many in this age group, pneumonia is a main complication of influenza often resulting in hospitalization or death. Pneumonia vaccine is available all year at the local health department or your health care provider.

Community groups that vaccinate those outside the current recommendations are being encouraged to delay organized flu vaccination campaigns until November.

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