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News Release

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Utah Department of Health Lifts Flu Vaccine Restrictions

(Salt Lake City, UT) - The Utah Department of Health (UDOH) is lifting all influenza (flu) vaccine restrictions for the 2000/2001 flu vaccination campaign. This year's flu vaccine shipments were delayed due to manufacturing problems. In response to the delay, the UDOH issued recommendations for vaccine use among priority groups to assure those with greatest need received the vaccine first. The recommendations were issued to help limit flu transmission to those at highest risk of serious complications. There is now enough vaccine arriving so that the recommended restrictions can be lifted and community and employer flu vaccine clinics can proceed for all who are interested.

Throughout September, October and November the UDOH issued recommendations asking that people with high-risk health conditions get top priority for the existing vaccine. This strategy has been successful. The UDOH, along with the Utah Adult Immunization Coalition (UAIC), believes that the majority of high-risk individuals have had adequate opportunity to receive the vaccine. If you have a high-risk health condition and have not yet received your vaccination, call the UDOH or your local health department to find out where to obtain the shot.

Typically flu shot campaigns are winding down in December, this year they are picking up. The UDOH estimates that the flu vaccine season will continue through January. Now that the supplies are consistently available, the UDOH would like to especially encourage teachers, caregivers, healthcare and public safety professionals and all people over 50 to get the shot.

"The last two months have made for a highly unusual flu vaccine season where the situation changed weekly," said Linda Abel, UDOH Immunization Program Manager. "We appreciate the UAIC, businesses, health organizations and others that collaborated with the Department to work through this unique situation." The UDOH specifically noted the important contributions of Intermountain Health Care and the University of Utah who shared early vaccine shipments with public health agencies so supplies could be placed in areas of need. "We are able to lift the recommended restrictions now because medical offices, private providers and others made sure that the elderly and ill had their shots first," added Abel.

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People over age 65 and those of all ages with chronic illnesses who are susceptible to complications from the flu are encouraged to get the additional protection of a pneumonia vaccine. Pneumonia vaccine is available year round and can protect you from serious illness and reduce your chances of being hospitalized due to pneumonia. Unlike the flu vaccine that must be given each year, the pneumonia vaccine offers lifetime protection after just one shot.

For more information, call your health care provider, your local health department or the Utah Immunization Hotline at 1-800-275-0659.

Note: To date, 2 confirmed influenza cases have been reported in Utah.

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