



Southeastern Idaho Public Health

For Immediate Release
January 3, 2017

Contact: Tracy McCulloch
239-5250

Southeastern Idaho Public Health Announces Flu Deaths in Southeastern Idaho

Southeastern Idaho Public Health is sad to announce that two deaths have occurred from an influenza-related illness in Health District 6. The deaths occurred in a southeastern Idaho man and woman, both over the age of 50. Southeastern Idaho Public Health officials would like to express their condolences to the families of the man and woman who have died. This is Idaho's third influenza-associated death of the season, and a reminder that the influenza season is here. Last flu season, 26 people were reported to have died from flu-related illnesses in Idaho.

It is important for all of us to take precautions to avoid influenza infection. Now is the time to visit your health care provider, local public health district, or pharmacy to get vaccinated. Getting vaccinated today will help protect you and your family for the rest of the influenza season.

Influenza is a contagious respiratory illness that infects 5 to 20 percent of the population every year. Symptoms include fever, headache, fatigue, and sometimes a cough and sore throat. Most people who get influenza recover after a few days, but some people may develop serious complications and even die. Every year, the flu contributes to an estimated 36,000 deaths in the United States, along with more than 200,000 hospitalizations.

People who are especially vulnerable to complications of the flu include:

- Pregnant women,
- People 50 years of age and older,
- People of any age with certain chronic medical conditions, such as asthma, diabetes, heart or lung diseases,
- People who live in nursing homes and other long-term care facilities,
- People who live with or care for those at high risk for complications from flu.

Everyone over six months of age are recommended to get the flu vaccine. This season's vaccine has been updated to match viruses that are currently circulating. This year's supply does not include a nasal spray, which had been a favorite for some children and adults less than 50 years of age. Recent studies by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention showed the nasal spray vaccines were not as effective in recent years in preventing the flu compared with the flu shot. Options for vaccination this year include a quadrivalent vaccine, which offers protection from four strains of flu instead of the traditional vaccine that covers three strains.

There also is a high dose vaccine for people over the age of 65, and a vaccine that is injected under the skin and not into the muscle.

Along with the vaccine, people should follow these recommendations to protect themselves and others:

- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing to prevent infecting other people. Avoid people who appear sick.
- Stay home from work or school when sick,
- Wash your hands frequently, especially after being out in the public. Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth until you have washed your hands.
- Get plenty of rest, drink plenty of liquids, eat nutritious foods and take part in physical activity to stay healthy.

For information about influenza and how to stay healthy, please visit www.cdc.gov/flu or <http://flu.idaho.gov> or contact Southeastern Idaho Public Health at 233-9080.