



South Central District Health

Keeping your family & community healthy
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PRESS RELEASE – For Immediate Release

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District Health Reports That Influenza Season Begins in Idaho

Flu season appears to be starting and South Central District Health (SCDH) says it is still not too late to be vaccinated. Influenza is picking up in Idaho, specifically in Boise and Idaho Falls. That is the message SCDH received from Colleen Greenwalt, IBL - Microbiology Section Manager, Idaho Bureau of Laboratories (IBL), on Friday, Jan. 5. According to the IBL, lab-submissions for type and culturing of positive influenza cases are going up. In Idaho, the influenza season usually begins in late December and peaks in February.

Influenza viruses have been confirmed in 12 specimens submitted to the IBL. Greenwalt says it is becoming apparent that this will be a season with three distinct viruses circulating at once. One Influenza B virus as well as Influenza AH1 viruses and most recently an Influenza AH3 virus have been identified in Idaho. These findings appear to support what other states have been reporting.

The CDC Influenza Update (found at <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/weekly/>) states that it is too early in the influenza season to determine which of these influenza viruses will predominate or how well the vaccine and circulating strains will match.

CDC also reports that during week 51 (December 17 – December 23, 2006), influenza activity increased in the United States. Among specimens tested by influenza collaborating laboratories U.S. World Health Organization (WHO) and National Respiratory and Enteric Virus Surveillance System (NREVSS), 10.1% were positive. Four states (Tennessee, Alabama, Georgia and Florida) reported widespread influenza activity; twelve states reported regional influenza activity (Nevada, North Carolina, Kentucky, Indiana, Iowa, South Dakota, Texas, Kansas, Louisiana and Mississippi); five states and the District of Columbia reported local influenza activity (including Utah and Arizona in the West); and 25 states, including Idaho and New York City, reported sporadic influenza activity.

On a national level, laboratory and outpatient influenza-like illness (ILI) surveillance data indicated an increase in activity from late November to late December. ILI was above baseline for the

third consecutive week this season and, for the second consecutive week, more than 10% of specimens tested were positive for influenza.

Locally, Tom Machala, Communicable Disease and Prevention Division Director at SCDH, says influenza surveillance has not resulted in positive cases yet from participating physician offices and hospitals across the District, but it will only be a matter of time now that it appears to have arrived in the state. SCDH encourages people to help prevent spreading the flu by covering their coughs and using good hand washing etiquette. SCDH and many local providers still have plenty of influenza vaccine.

For more information about influenza vaccination clinics, call your local SCDH office: Bellevue, 788-4335; Burley, 678-8221; Gooding, 934-4477; Jerome, 324-8838; Rupert, 436-7185; and Twin Falls, 734-5900.

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