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PRESS RELEASE – For Immediate Release

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Influenza Is Now Widespread In the United States, What the Public Needs To Know

MAGIC VALLEY – The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is reporting widespread influenza activity in most of the United States, including Idaho. South Central Public Health District (SCPHD) wants to remind the public, this is the time of year we tend to see influenza-like illnesses start to peak in our region as well.

“The flu virus spreads quickly, particularly in group settings like schools, churches, and workplaces.” Said Christi Dawson-Skuza, Epidemiologist. “Local schools are reporting a high number of sick students with influenza-like symptoms.”

The flu is contagious before symptoms start, so practicing good hygiene at all times can help prevent its spread. SCPHD recommends people:

- Get a flu vaccination.
- Wash hands often and particularly after sneezing and coughing.
- Avoid touching their eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Cover their coughs and sneezes or cough into their sleeve.
- Stay home when sick.

The CDC reports the H1N1 flu virus is currently the most common influenza virus this season. It is covered in the seasonal vaccine offered at many pharmacies, doctor’s offices, and every public health district office in the Magic Valley.

“It’s not too late to get your flu vaccine. Flu activity tends to peak in January and February so it’s still a good idea to protect anyone over 6 months old,” says Cheryle Becker, Public Health Division Administrator. “The flu vaccine contains three or four flu viruses, including H1N1, to help prevent serious complications from influenza in as many people as possible.”

Vaccination is particularly important for people at high risk for serious flu complications (the elderly, children under the age of two, people with chronic health conditions such as those involving the lungs and heart, diabetes or cancer and pregnant women). Medication is available to help shorten the duration of influenza symptoms. This medication must be started within the first 2 days of symptoms to be most effective. Persons with high risk medical conditions may check with their doctor about obtaining the medication even if they have been sick for more than 2 days.

Visit phd5.idaho.gov for clinic schedules and contact information.

To see the latest outbreak map in Idaho:

http://gethealthy.dhw.idaho.gov/index.php/home/get_dashboard/23

The flu season, explained: <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/season/flu-season.htm>