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H1N1 Swine Flu Raises Awareness of the Importance of Immunizations

(Sacramento, CA) -- Recently, the novel H1N1 (swine) flu pandemic has highlighted the importance of having an effective immunization available against life-threatening vaccine-preventable diseases.

August is recognized as National Immunization Awareness Month. It is a great time to make sure that you and your family are up-to-date with vaccinations. Many people think that immunizations are just for infants and children but there are a number of immunizations that the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommends for adolescents, adults, and seniors. By staying up-to-date on recommended vaccines, individuals can protect themselves, family, friends, and their communities from contagious, vaccine-preventable infections.

Immunizations are considered one of public health's greatest achievements in history. In fact, they have been so successful in preventing disease that it has led some people to believe that immunizations are not needed.

"It is important to keep in mind that, even though we don't commonly see these vaccine-preventable diseases in the U.S., many of these diseases are still around, such as pertussis (whooping cough), and still others are just a plane or boat ride away," said Glennah Trochet M.D., Sacramento County Health Officer. "Fact is, if people stop getting immunized, the diseases no longer commonly seen in the U.S. will return. The recent outbreaks of measles within California are an example of this."

In addition, despite the fact that immunizations can prevent life-threatening illness, the CDC still reports that tens of thousands of people die in the U.S. each year from vaccine-preventable diseases. National Immunization Awareness Month is dedicated to protecting the public and saving lives by raising awareness about vaccinations. August is the perfect time to remind family, friends, co-workers, and others in the community to catch up on their vaccinations. Parents are enrolling their children in school, students are entering college, and healthcare workers are preparing for the upcoming flu season.

Are you wondering if you and your family members are up-to-date with immunizations? The following are brief summaries of recommended immunizations for infants, adolescents, adults, and

seniors. Please keep in mind that these are recommendations for healthy individuals. Persons considered medically high-risk may need more or fewer immunizations:

Infants/children:

Birth:	Hepatitis B
2 months:	DTaP, Hepatitis B, Hib, PCV (pneumococcal), Rotavirus, and Polio
4 months:	DTaP, Hepatitis B, Hib, PCV (pneumococcal), Rotavirus, and Polio
6 months:	DTaP, Hepatitis B, Hib, PCV (pneumococcal), Rotavirus, and Polio
12 months:	MMR#1, Varicella (chickenpox), Hib, Hepatitis A and PCV (pneumococcal)
15-18 months:	DTaP and Hepatitis A
4-6 years:	Polio, DTaP, and MMR #2

Adolescents:

11-12 years: Tdap, Meningococcal, and HPV (3 doses for girls only).

In addition, Children 6 months through 18 years of age need an annual seasonal flu vaccine.

If a child or adolescent did not receive all recommended vaccines on time, they should get them as soon as possible. It's never too late to vaccinate!

Adults:

Adults (19-26 years): Tdap or Td, HPV (3 doses for women only), Varicella if never had the disease and not immunized as a child, MMR if never fully immunized as a child.

Adults (27-49): Tdap or Td, Varicella if never had the disease and not immunized as a child, and MMR if never fully immunized as a child.

Adults (50-59): Tdap or Td, Varicella if never had the disease and not immunized as a child, and the annual flu vaccine.

Adults (60-64): Tdap or Td, Varicella if never had the disease and not immunized as a child, Zoster (shingles), and the annual flu vaccine.

Adults (65+): Td booster every 10 years, Varicella if never had the disease and not immunized as a child, Zoster (shingles), Pneumococcal, and the annual flu vaccine.

Many people, as well as public health officials, are concerned about the novel H1N1 flu virus. This summer, trials are underway on a novel H1N1 flu virus vaccine that is expected to be released later this year. The CDC is determining who should receive this vaccine first if there isn't enough for

everyone who would want it. Until there is an immunization for the novel H1N1 virus available, the CDC recommends that you take the following prevention steps:

- receive a seasonal flu vaccination
- wash hands often with soap and water
- cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing and sneezing
- try not to touch your eyes, nose, and mouth with your hands
- avoid close contact with people who are ill, and
- stay home if you are sick for at least 7 days or symptom-free for 24 hours.

As long as the H1N1 virus continues to cause mild disease in most people, Sacramento County Public Health has recommended that people can stay home until symptom-free and without a fever for 24 hours, even if it is fewer than seven days. This recommendation could change if the virus changes and causes more severe disease.

Sacramento County Public Health will keep you posted on any new developments regarding the novel H1N1 flu virus.

For more information about immunizations, please call the Sacramento County Public Health Immunization Assistance Program at (916) 875-7468 or your own physician. And remember... Don't Wait to Vaccinate!

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