

## News Release

Contact: Jennifer Sizemore  
(702) 383-1225  
David Tonelli  
(702) 383-6320

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Public Health Update – Flu activity documented**

(Las Vegas, Nev., - October 21, 2003) – Confirmed reports of flu outbreaks in Texas prompted the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to issue a notice emphasizing the importance of timely influenza vaccinations for the public. While early cases of influenza have been documented in past years, the typical flu season in the United States begins in November or December and reaches peak levels from late December through April.

Sporadic cases of flu have been reported this season as early as August in several states. The majority of the flu strains identified are similar to the strains used in the vaccine which is expected to provide good protection against these types of flu. However, approximately 33 percent of the strains differ from the strains contained in this year's vaccine. This means that the protection offered by the vaccine may be lower, but is expected to provide some degree of effectiveness.

“We have been fortunate these past few years to have an adequate supply of the vaccine and relatively mild flu seasons. However, the documentation of flu cases this early in the season should serve as a reminder to the public to receive their flu shot as soon as possible,” said Dr. Donald Kwalick, chief health officer for the Clark County Health District.

“The fact that strains not necessarily covered by the vaccine have been reported should not deter anyone from receiving their vaccination. In fact, it is even more important since it may still offer some degree of protection from these strains,” said Kwalick.

The influenza vaccine is recommended for anyone who wants to protect themselves, or their contacts, from the illness. It is strongly recommended that those at risk from complications from the flu receive the vaccination as soon as possible. These high-risk groups include:

- Persons 65 years of age and older
- Women who will be in the second or third trimester of pregnancy during influenza season
- Person with one of several chronic, long-term health problems (e.g. heart or lung disease, kidney problems, asthma, and HIV/AIDS or any other illness or condition that suppresses the immune system).
- Children 6 to 23 months of age and their household contacts and out-of home caregivers

(more)

The Clark County Health District is offering flu shots at its public health center locations on Monday through Friday, from 8 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. Public health centers are located at:

Ravenholt Public Health Center  
625 Shadow Lane  
383-1351

Henderson Public Health Center  
129 W. Lake Mead Drive  
564-3232

East Las Vegas Public Health Center  
560 N. Nellis Boulevard  
437-4643

North Las Vegas Public Health Center  
1820 W. Lake Mead Blvd., Suite F  
759-0502

Additionally, community clinics are planned for the following locations:

October 22, 2003

Derfelt Senior Center  
3343 W. Washington  
9:30 a.m. until 11:30 a.m.

October 27, 2003

East Las Vegas Community and Senior Center  
250 N. Eastern @ Stewart  
9 a.m. until 2 p.m.

October 24, 2003

Chinatown Plaza Mall  
4255 Spring Mountain Road  
1 p.m. until 4 p.m.

November 7, 2003

Cambridge Senior Center  
3930 Cambridge Street  
10 a.m. until 2 p.m.

Methods of payment for flu shots include Medicare Part B, Medicare Railroad Part B, Medicaid, Secure Horizons and Senior Dimensions. Patients must present their insurance card or Medicaid voucher at the time of service. For those not covered, or without proof of insurance, the cost is \$20. **Additionally, children age 6-23 months, who qualify, can receive the vaccine free through the Vaccines for Children program.**

For more information on flu clinics contact the Clark County Health District at 383-1351.

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