



**News Release**  
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## **Feeling Ill? Think Twice Before Rushing to the Hospital this Flu Season**

*Hospitals & medical offices expect long waits, limited care this flu season*

*Dr. Vitek is available for interviews from 1:30-3:00 p.m. today*

(Salt Lake County) – Influenza cases continue to rise in Salt Lake County and the Salt Lake Valley Health Department (SLVHD) wants local residents to know what to do if they become ill with influenza-like illness in the coming weeks. A fever over 100°F and cough and/or sore throat define influenza-like illness.

“Most who become ill this flu season will not need to seek medical care,” says Dr. Dagmar Vitek, medical officer for SLVHD. “Unless you have conditions that increase your risk of complications from flu, or you are experiencing severe symptoms such as trouble breathing, the best thing to do is rest at home.”

Hospital emergency rooms will be busy this flu season, and as a reminder only those who are experiencing severe symptoms should seek medical attention. Testing to confirm the H1N1 virus is reserved for the critically ill, and rushing to the hospital when you don’t have severe symptoms will likely result in only limited care and increase the likelihood of spreading H1N1 in the community. Preventing the spread of the virus is one of the best ways to keep influenza under control.

“The strongest message we can send individuals is this: if you are sick, stay home,” says Dr. Vitek.

High risk groups at the top of the H1N1 vaccine priority list include: pregnant women, those in direct care and contact with infants less than 6 months old, healthcare and EMS personnel, people 6 months through 24 years and people 24 – 64 years with chronic medical conditions such as asthma, diabetes, cardiovascular disease or compromised immune systems.

Concerned residents at high risk for complications should consult with their doctor soon to discuss possible treatment this flu season. The best way to contact your healthcare provider is by **calling** first, as in-office treatment will likely not be needed.

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SLVHD expects to receive a limited supply of H1N1 vaccine in mid/late-October. Targeted distribution will commence once the vaccine is received.

“We expect to receive a consistent shipment of H1N1 vaccine every week after the first supply arrives,” says Gary Edwards, executive director for SLVHD. “Once the target groups in our community have been vaccinated, we will open up vaccination to anyone who would like to receive it.”

Concrete distribution plans have not yet been finalized, and SLVHD is working with numerous community outlets to support their vaccination outreach. Likely vaccination sites include hospitals, clinics, private providers, pharmacies, schools and daycares (with signed parental consent), and at SLVHD’s own mass vaccination clinics.

Staying informed and educated this flu season is crucial– and SLVHD is making it easier than ever. Information resources include:

- H1N1 Email Alerts: <http://www.slvhealth.org/cfml/h1n1alert/index.cfm>
- SLVHD H1N1 website: <http://www.slvhealth.org/h1n1> (refreshes every hour)
- Twitter feed for real-time updates: <http://www.twitter.com/slvhealthdept>
- Facebook page: <http://www.facebook.com/slvhealthdept>

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