



SOUTHWEST PUBLIC HEALTH DISTRICT

1109 North Jackson Street
Albany, Georgia 31701-2022
(229) 430-4599 Fax (229) 430-5143 Emergency 888-430-4590
www.southwestgeorgiapublichealth.org

July 21, 2009
For Immediate Release

Carolyn Maschke, Public Information Officer
229-430-1969; 229-357-0257; cwmaschke@dhr.state.ga.us

Public Health touts National Immunization Awareness Month observance in August

With summer vacation winding down and concerns that Pandemic H1N1 influenza will hit hard this fall, Public Health officials are urging everyone to observe National Immunization Awareness Month by ensuring their vaccinations are up-to-date.

“August is the time when parents are already getting back-to-school shots for their children, college students are being immunized before fall enrollment and healthcare workers are ramping up for seasonal flu,” said Southwest Health District Health Director Dr. Jacqueline Grant. “But this autumn we are also facing the threat of a pandemic. It is more important than ever to protect yourself and your loved ones against infectious diseases by getting the vaccinations recommended for your age and stage of life.”

Immunization is one of the most significant public health achievements of the 20th century, said Southwest Health District Immunization Coordinator Sue Dale of Moultrie.

“Vaccines have eradicated smallpox, eliminated wild poliovirus in the United States and significantly reduced the number of cases of measles, diphtheria, rubella, pertussis and other diseases,” Dale said. “But the viruses and bacteria that cause measles, mumps, whooping cough, chickenpox, lockjaw and other infectious diseases still exist.”

Even diseases that have been eliminated in this country, such as polio, are only a plane ride away, she said. “Polio, and other infectious diseases, can be passed on to people who are not protected by vaccines.”

This fall, along with seasonal flu vaccine, healthcare authorities are planning to begin immunization campaigns against Pandemic H1N1 Influenza, Dr. Grant said.

“Drug manufacturers are working against the clock to try to have H1N1 vaccine ready by mid-October. It is still too early in the process to know with certainty when the vaccine will be ready, whether it will come in more than one dose and whether it can be administered in conjunction with the regular

Baker	Calhoun	Colquitt	Decatur	Dougherty	Early	Grady
Lee	Miller	Mitchell	Seminole	Terrell	Thomas	Worth

seasonal flu vaccine,” she added. “As we learn more, we will issue recommendations, and it will be important for the public to stay informed.”

Since vaccines prevent disease rather than attempt to cure it after the fact, they do more than improve health, said Grant. “They also reduce missed time at school and work and reduce costs associated with doctor visits and hospitalizations.”

Finally, Grant said, vaccines protect not only the person who receives them but also those around him or her.

“When a critical number of people within a community are vaccinated, the whole group is less likely to get the disease. This protection is called herd immunity. That’s why vaccines are vital to the public health goal of preventing diseases,” Grant said.

Grant said back-to-school vaccinations and flu vaccinations are available at county health departments.

For more information about immunizations, contact your local county health department or go online to www.southwestgeorgiapublichealth.org.

###

Baker	Calhoun	Colquitt	Decatur	Dougherty	Early	Grady
Lee	Miller	Mitchell	Seminole	Terrell	Thomas	Worth