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NEWS RELEASE

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AFFORDABLE IMMUNIZATIONS AVAILABLE TO ALL OF IDAHO'S CHILDREN *Stop Vaccine-Preventable Diseases from Spreading*

The immunization rate of Idaho's children is low when compared to other states. And, despite access to affordable immunizations, we continue to see preventable diseases in our state. Disease outbreaks are a reminder that there is a need to have your child's vaccinations up-to-date in order to protect the child and others around him.

Many changes have occurred in the State of Idaho's Vaccine for Children program over the past year. However, the most important thing for parents to know is that all children—whether uninsured or insured—may continue to receive vaccinations at Eastern Idaho Public Health District (EIPHD) offices or through their private health care providers through Idaho's Immunization Program. This program allows children ages 18 years and younger to receive vaccines at no cost and requires only the payment of nominal administration fees. However, no child in Idaho will be denied immunizations due to an inability to pay the administration fee at the time of service.

Effective April 1, 2010, for children's immunization services at Eastern Idaho Public Health District, clients with insurance will now have their insurance billed for the administration fee by the health district. "This process change will make receiving children's immunization services at the health district much more convenient for our insured clients," stated Gary Rillema, EIPHD's Director of Family and Community Health Services. In the past, insured clients were expected to pay the administration fee at the time their children received their immunizations and then could submit the expense to their insurance company for reimbursement.

Vaccine-preventable diseases like whooping cough (pertussis), measles, and mumps are still present in our population. Tragically in 2009, an infant from Teton County died of Pertussis. Unfortunately, adults can unknowingly spread this illness to those at highest risk from the disease, like infants and children.

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An outbreak of measles was recently reported in Vancouver, Canada, which likely came from someone attending the Olympics there in February. This outbreak has now spread into the interior of British Columbia and health officials warn that the disease could spread into the United States. Health officials recommend that if you are planning to go to British Columbia, make sure you have been immunized and take proof of your immunization status with you.

Furthermore, a mumps outbreak that began at a summer camp in New York last summer has continued to spread, now affecting over 1,500 people. With our world's widespread airline travel, any disease could be just one plane ride away from being introduced into our nation's population.

It is unfortunate that we continue to see outbreaks of these diseases—which are all preventable. If you or your child is behind on your immunizations, please contact your local health district office or health care provider to schedule an appointment today to get them up-to-date. They could save your life or the life of a loved one!

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