



Indiana State Department of Health



FOR RELEASE:

Nov. 23, 2009

CONTACT:

David Ayers
ITPC Media Team
(317) 554-6357 or (317) 502-8536

Jennifer Dunlap
ISDH
(317) 233-7315

TOBACCO CESSATION CAN HELP “FIGHT THE FLU”

INDIANAPOLIS – Given the current H1N1 flu pandemic, State Health Commissioner Judy Monroe, M.D. says there’s never been a better time to quit smoking.

“Smoking damages your lung tissue, making you more susceptible to lung infections like bronchitis and pneumonia, which may complicate an influenza infection,” said Dr. Monroe. “Damaged lung tissue does not heal as efficiently after an infection as healthy lung tissue. Smoking also suppresses your immune system, making a smoker more susceptible to getting the flu in the first place.”

“When we look at the hospitalizations and deaths from the 2009 H1N1 flu, we can clearly see the negative impact chronic diseases, including tobacco-related illnesses, have on a person’s risk to develop serious illness or to die from the flu,” said Dr. Monroe.

In fact, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has targeted individuals aged 25-64 with underlying medical conditions, like asthma or Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD), to be among the first to get the 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine as they are at higher risk for influenza-related complications.

Pregnant women are also targeted to be among the first to receive the H1N1 flu vaccine. According to the CDC, pregnant women are at a higher risk to get the flu and to have severe complications, including preterm labor, severe pneumonia, fetal distress, and even maternal death. Smoking during pregnancy can increase these risks, according to Dr. Monroe.

“Unfortunately, there are counties in our state with significantly higher than average rates of women who are pregnant and smoke,” said Dr. Monroe. “We know pregnant women are at higher risk of complications from the flu, and smoking can only compound the threat.”

-more-

Page 2 – Tobacco Cessation Can Help Fight the Flu

“Our goal is to help Hoosiers live longer, healthier lives,” said Karla Sneegas, executive director, Indiana Tobacco Prevention and Cessation agency. “We know current economic issues in the nation are likely causing extra stress for individuals, which can make it even more difficult to quit. However, we want Hoosiers to know, if you are ready to quit smoking, we are here to help.

“The first step in quitting can be as simple as picking up the phone,” said Sneegas. “The free Indiana Tobacco Quitline – 1-800-QUIT-NOW – is available from 7 a.m. – 3 a.m. seven days a week with highly trained quit coaches ready to help with advice and tips designed to help callers quit for life.”

“Our goal is not only to help people quit using tobacco, but to assist their family and friends as well. A strong support network is critical to success in quitting,” added Sneegas.

For more information regarding information on how to quit using tobacco, call the free Indiana Tobacco Quitline at 1-800-QUIT-NOW or visit www.in.gov/itpc.

#