

Lack of vaccines has killed 45 Utah adults in 3 years

<http://www.standard.net/stories/2011/10/03/lack-vaccines-has-killed-45-utah-adults-3-years%23.Tos8DXeGisM.printfriendly> October 4, 2011

SALT LAKE CITY -- By now, you've probably made sure your children are up to date with their vaccinations.

Now roll up your own sleeve.

The Utah Department of Health reports approximately 50,000 adults die from vaccine-preventable diseases or their complications each year in America.

In Utah, 45 people have died since 2008 from pneumococcal disease, a leading cause of serious illness in children and adults.

Other deaths that could have been prevented through vaccination in Utah over the past several years include mumps and hepatitis A. In addition, approximately 360 people across the state die from influenza each year.

The best way to protect yourself? Get caught up on your vaccinations.

"Everyone needs to understand that the impact of people not getting vaccinated is communitywide," said Teresa Garrett, director of the Division of Disease Control and Prevention at UDOH.

"When the first measles case was confirmed, every person who had been in contact with the infected individual and couldn't prove his or her immunization status was asked to stay home."

As a result, Garrett said, the outbreak affected area hospitals, clinics, private providers, day care centers, one school district, four schools, a community college and two large community gatherings.

Children missed classroom lessons, assignments and exams, along with sporting events, proms and other activities.

One business in central Utah had to ask 100 employees who were born after 1957 and couldn't provide proof of immunization to stay home as a precaution.

"We sometimes refer to adults as the sandwich generation, and this is especially true with immunizations," said Lori Buttars, Weber-Morgan Health Department public relations director.

"People who are the most vulnerable to contagious diseases are the very young and the elderly who have compromised immune systems. Adults are the caretakers sandwiched in between. They work, are out in the community more, and their potential to spread disease plays a huge role in prevention."

Buttars said many adults were immunized as children, but immunity tends to wane over time, so it's important to keep vaccination schedules current.

"We also recommend keeping a record of your immunizations, so if there's an outbreak, as with the recent measles cases, they are able to know their status and can continue to go to work and care for their families and not have the added worry about being exposed and wonder if they've been immunized," Buttars said.

Some adult immunizations include pneumococcal, meningococcal, hepatitis A and B, Zoster, measles, mumps and rubella, tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis and varicella.

If you would like to check your immunization status, visit <http://www.usiis.org>.

A complete list of adult immunizations can be found at www.immunize-utah.org.