2009 H1N1 Flu and the Holidays

State public health director offers holiday health tips to avoid the flu

SPRINGFIELD – Millions of people travel every year during the holiday season to spend time with friends and family. With the 2009 H1N1 flu still circulating widely in Illinois and most of the country, Dr. Damon T. Arnold, Director of the Illinois Department of Public Health, is urging people to remember four things when traveling during the holiday season:

- Travel only when feeling well
- Wash hands frequently to prevent the spread of germs
- Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or sleeve
- Get flu vaccinations as soon as available (both seasonal flu and 2009 H1N1 flu for priority groups)

“As we enter the holiday season, we know the H1N1 flu is a concern for many people, especially those traveling. Taking some basic preventive measures, including staying home if you are sick, washing your hands often, covering your cough and sneeze, and getting vaccinated when possible, can greatly reduce your chances of becoming ill,” Dr. Arnold said. “Don’t let the flu ruin your holidays.”

The flu is spread mainly through person-to-person contact when an infected person does not properly cover a cough or sneeze. Holiday travel and gatherings increase the opportunity for person-to-person contact, making it an ideal way for illness to spread.

For more information about 2009 H1N1 flu and information on vaccine sites in your area, log onto www.ready.illinois.gov. Or, for non-medical questions about the H1N1 virus, call the Illinois Flu Hotline at (866) 848-2094 or (866) 241-2138 (Spanish).