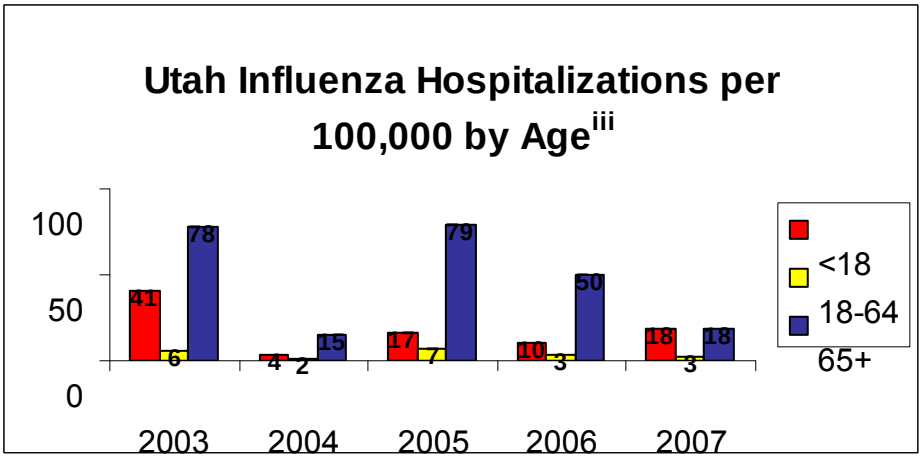
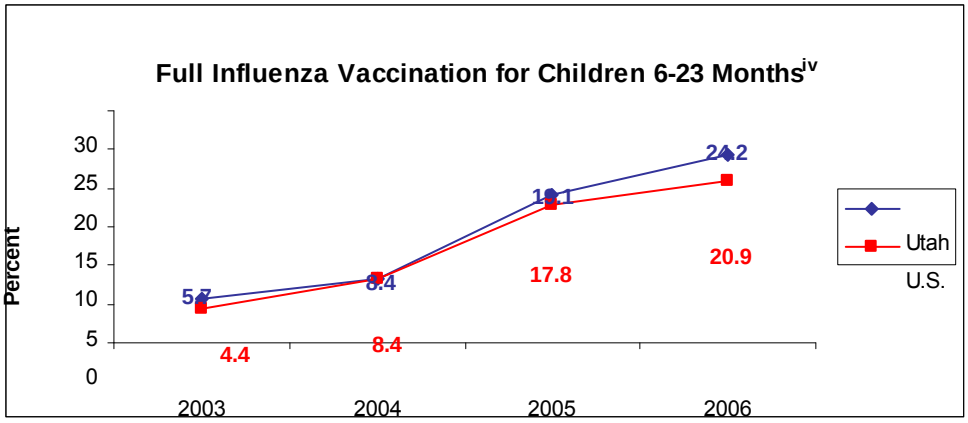
Influenza (flu) is a very contagious viral infection of the nose, throat, bronchial tubes, and lungs. Flu is a respiratory infection and generally does not involve gastrointestinal symptoms, except in very young children. It is estimated that 30 to 60 million U.S. residents get the flu each year. About 100,000 of them are hospitalized and an estimated 36,000 die each year from complications (primarily pneumonia) associated with the infection. Populations that are particularly susceptible to influenza include adults 65 years and older (more than 90% of all influenza deaths), children less than 24 months, people with cardiovascular disease, chronic respiratory disease, and chronic metabolic disease such as diabetes[i]. Because the ACIP now recommends routine influenza vaccination for all children 6 months through 18 years, Utah hospitalization data have been organized accordingly (see Chart below).

Flu vaccine is up to 90% effective in preventing illness for healthy populations younger than 65 [ii], but effectiveness is contingent upon the strains used in the vaccine being similar to the strains that circulate during flu season. For populations older than 65 years, the vaccine is 30-40% effective in preventing illness, 50-60% in preventing hospitalization, and 80% effective in preventing death. As indicated below, Utah compares favorably with national flu vaccination rates for children 6-23 months, but there is still much room for improvement. Charts for flu vaccination among adults 18 years and older can be found on the *Child and Adult Immunization* pages in the main body of this report.

A data query was made to the USIIS staff to determine influenza vaccination levels among children 2-18 years during the most recent flu season (September 1, 2008 to May 31, 2009). Immunization coverage was 7.5% for all ages (median 5.8%). Coverage was lowest in Beaver County (1.5%) and highest in Piute County (20.5%). State coverage levels were highest for the 2-4 age group (14.5%) and decreased as the child age group increased, with a coverage level for children 15-18 of 3.2%.





Sources: [i] http://ibis.health.utah.gov/indicator/view/InflCas.Year.html, [ii] Epidemiology and Prevention of Vaccine-Preventable Diseases (CDC Pink Book), [iii] IBIS-PH Hospitalization data, [iv] NIS 2003-2006.