



# TDCJ Risk Management's Training Circular

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## Cold and Flu Season



### IT'S THAT TIME OF YEAR AGAIN!!



Cold and flu season is just around the corner. Are you ready for it? Have you taken proactive measures to protect you and your family from the flu bug?

The agency is dependent on you and the skills you possess to continue to operate the agency in a safe and efficient manner. In order to perform at your best, you need to be able to make clear and concise decisions.

Not feeling well or combating a cold or flu could inhibit your ability to do so. In our business, inattentiveness and/or poor decision making can lead to disastrous results.

It doesn't matter whether you are working the Administrative Segregation wing on a

unit or you are in front of a computer all day that is miles away from the nearest razor wire, your decisions have an impact on the agency. It is imperative that you keep yourself healthy.

First, with all of the attention that various strains of the flu are getting lately, determining which is which can get rather confusing. So...

### FLU TYPES DEFINED

- *Seasonal (or common) flu* is a respiratory illness that can be transmitted person to person. Most people have some immunity, and a vaccine is available.



- *Avian (or bird) flu* is caused by influenza viruses that occur naturally among wild birds. The

H5N1 variant is deadly to domestic fowl and can be transmitted from birds to humans. There is no human immunity and no vaccine is available.



- *Pandemic flu* is a virulent human flu that causes a global outbreak, or pandemic, of serious illness. Because there is little natural immunity, the disease can spread easily from person to person. Currently, there is no pandemic flu.
- *Noroviruses* are a group of related, single-stranded RNA, non-enveloped viruses that cause acute gastroenteritis in humans. Noroviruses spread from person to person, through contaminated food or water, and by touching contaminated surfaces.



- 2009 H1N1 virus is thought to occur in the same way that seasonal flu spreads. Flu viruses are spread mainly from person to person through coughing, sneezing or talking by people with influenza. Sometimes people may become infected by touching something – such as a surface or object – with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth or nose.

### FOCUSING ON THE COMMON FLU

The Flu is an infection of the respiratory system caused by the influenza virus. There are three types of influenza virus: **A**, **B**, and **C**.

- Types **A** and **B** are the most severe. The viruses change constantly and different strains circulate around the world every year. The body's natural defenses cannot keep up with these changes. Therefore, a person should get a flu shot each year.
- Type **C** causes either a very mild illness, or has no symptoms at all. It does not cause epidemics and does not have the severe public health impact that

influenza types **A** and **B** do.

### DO YOU MEDICATE OR NOT?

The common flu is caused by a virus, not bacteria. Therefore, medications can minimize discomfort associated with flu symptoms, but these medications do not treat the virus infection.

### WHAT THE CDC HAS TO SAY ABOUT VIRUSES

Are you aware that colds, flu, most sore throats, and bronchitis are caused by viruses?

Did you know that antibiotics do not help fight viruses? It's true. Plus, taking antibiotics when you have a virus may do more harm than good.



Taking antibiotics when they are not needed increases your risk of getting an infection later that resists antibiotic treatment.

Antibiotics kill bacteria, not viruses such as:

- colds or flu;
- most coughs and bronchitis;
- sore throats not caused by strep;

- runny noses.



Taking antibiotics for viral infections, such as a cold, cough, the flu, or most bronchitis, will not:

- cure the infections;
- keep other individuals from catching the illness;
- help you feel better.

### WHAT CAN I DO TO PROTECT MYSELF AND MY FAMILY?

When you use antibiotics appropriately, you do the best for your health, your family's health, and the health of those around you.

### WHAT TO DO

Talk with your healthcare provider about antibiotic resistance. When you are prescribed an antibiotic,

1. Take it exactly as the doctor tells you. Complete the prescribed course even if you are feeling better. If treatment stops too soon, some bacteria may survive and re-infect you.
2. This goes for children, too. Make sure your children take all medication as prescribed, even if they feel

better.

3. Throw away any leftover medication once you have completed your prescription.



### WHAT NOT TO DO

Do not take an antibiotic for a viral infection like a cold, a cough, or the flu.

Do not demand antibiotics when a doctor says they are not needed. They will not help treat your infection.

When you are prescribed an antibiotic,

1. Do not skip doses.
2. Do not save any antibiotics for the next time you get sick
3. Do not take antibiotics prescribed for someone else. The antibiotic may not be appropriate for your illness. Taking the wrong medicine may delay correct treatment and allow bacteria to multiply.

### DANGERS OF ANTIBIOTIC RESISTANCE

Antibiotic resistance has been called one of the world's most pressing public health problems.

It can cause significant danger and suffering for people who have common infections that once were easily treatable with antibiotics.

When antibiotics fail to work, the consequences are longer lasting illnesses; more doctor visits or extended hospital stays; and the need for more expensive and toxic medications.

Some resistant infections can cause death. Sick individuals aren't the only people who can suffer the consequences.

Families and entire communities feel the impact when disease-causing germs become resistant to antibiotics.



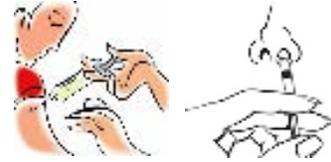
These antibiotic-resistant bacteria can quickly spread to family members, school mates and co-workers - threatening the community with a new strain of infectious disease that is more difficult to cure and more expensive to treat.

*As the old adage goes, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure."*

### PREVENTION: FLU VACCINES

There are currently two vaccine options, the flu shot and

the nasal spray vaccine.



The shot gives more reliable protection and the spray is recommended only for non-high risk groups.

The best tool for preventing the flu is the flu vaccine, and the best time to get a flu vaccine is from early October to mid-November.

The vaccine can also be given at any point during the flu season, even if the virus has already begun to spread in your community.

You need a flu vaccine every year because the virus is constantly changing and new vaccines are developed annually to protect against new strains.

### WHO SHOULD GET A FLU SHOT?

- Adults 50 years or older
- All children aged 6-23 months.
- Adults and children ages 2-64 with chronic medical conditions, especially asthma, other lung diseases, and heart disease.
- All women who will be pregnant during the influenza season.
- Residents of nursing

homes and other chronic care facilities.

- Health-care workers involved in direct patient care.
- Out-of-home caregivers and household contacts of children less than 6



months old.

- Any person who wishes to avoid the flu.

Remember, no vaccine is 100% protective and the flu vaccine is no exception.

Sometimes a person who has been vaccinated will still come down with the flu.

Consult your doctor to ensure that you are a candidate for the vaccine.

Please take care of yourself this flu season. The agency is counting on you!



## COLD AND FLU RECOVERY

### Get as much rest as you

**can:** If you only have a cold, and not flu, it's unlikely that you'll get away with cancelling everything and curling up in bed for the week. Even so, the more rest you can afford yourself the quicker your recovery should be. Sleep is your body's downtime, after all, and it uses this opportunity to run system checks and make essential repairs.

**Inhale:** Breathe in steam, from a hot shower, a bath, or a basin of hot (but not boiling) water. This can ease blocked or stuffy noses and even a sore throat. Adding a few inhalant drops such as menthol crystals or eucalyptus oil can also help, available from your local pharmacist.

**Keep your strength up:** Eat well, and be sure to drink plenty of fluids. Illness can rob your body of essential nutrients and vitamins; something you can effectively restore with a decent diet.

**Drink plenty of water:** An illness such as flu can leave your fluid levels low, so be sure to have a ready supply of water, or a soft drink of your choice, within easy reach. Eat when you can, too.



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