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Sept. 8, 2009

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News Release

Public Health Officials Continue to Ask People to Stay Home if They're Sick

How Should You Care for Someone Sick at Home With Flu

Colorado Springs, CO—H1N1 flu and seasonal flu can both be serious illnesses and involve complications, but most people do recover on their own at home, according to the El Paso County Department of Health and Environment.

“Most people with flu illness can and should be cared for at home,” said El Paso County Public Health Director Kandi Buckland. “Certainly, there are instances in which a sick person needs medical intervention, but for the most part, someone with flu can recover at home with the proper care.”

Part of caring for a sick family member at home is protecting other family members from exposure to the illness. Flu is spread from coughs and sneezes of sick people, and flu germs can linger on surfaces that are not disinfected.

Key Steps to Care for a Sick Person at Home:

- Keep the sick person away from other common areas of the house. For example, use a spare bedroom with its own bathroom, if possible. This reduces contact between other household members and the sick person.
- Choose one adult person in the household as the main caregiver, preferably one who does not have other health conditions or is at high risk for flu complications. Have the caregiver wear a facemask when in the sick person's room.
- Remind the sick person to:
 - Drink plenty of liquids to avoid getting dehydrated (such as water, broth, sports drinks, electrolyte beverages for infants).
 - Cover their coughs and sneezes, and to wash their hands or use hand sanitizer frequently.

- Wear a facemask—if available and tolerable—when sharing common places in the house.
- Stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever has gone away, without using fever-reducing medication.
- The sick person should not have visitors except for caregivers.
- Check with the sick person’s health care provider about any special care needed, if pregnant, or if the person has a health condition such as diabetes, heart disease, asthma, or other chronic health problems.
- Contact a health care provider if worrisome symptoms develop such as difficulty breathing or inability to drink any liquids.

To Help Protect Yourself and Other Household Members:

- Have all in the household clean their hands often, using soap and water or a hand sanitizer. Show children how to properly wash their hands.
- Keep surfaces clean by wiping them down with a store-bought household disinfectant. Clean at least once a day and concentrate on surfaces such as tables, bathroom sinks and toilets, phones, door knobs, children’s toys, or other commonly touched items.
- Do not share items that the sick person has used without cleaning them first. Linens, eating utensils and dishes belonging to those who are sick do not need to be cleaned separately, but these items should be washed thoroughly after use.
- Wash linens (such as bed sheets and towels) by using household laundry soap and tumble dry on a hot setting. Wash your hands after handling dirty laundry.
- Use paper towels for drying hands after hand washing or dedicate cloth towels to each person in the household. For example, have different colored towels for each person.
- Open windows several times a day to get fresh air into the house.

Additional guidance about caring for a sick person at home is available at the Health Department’s Web site, www.elpasocountyhealth.org.