



WELLCAP

Issue No 14– Fall, 2011

YOUR HEALTH



MATTERS

Greetings from Debby



This newsletter is dedicated to the topic of the FLU! I hope you will read it and take note of the information that will keep you well this coming flu season.

The single most important thing you can do to stay healthy this winter is wash your hands with soap and warm water. Many of you have asked about the value of hand sanitizers. They work, but make sure that the sanitizer contains at least 60% alcohol. Be sure to rub this into your hands until they are completely dry and be sure to apply to all surfaces of your hands.

Read on for more information. You can contact me if you have any further questions. I wish you a winter of good health!

Wash Your Hands to Help Prevent the Flu

This is the season when we see more and more people catch a cold or the influenza bug. Frequent hand washing is one of the easiest and best ways to avoid getting sick and spreading illness. Hand washing requires only soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer — a cleanser that doesn't require water.

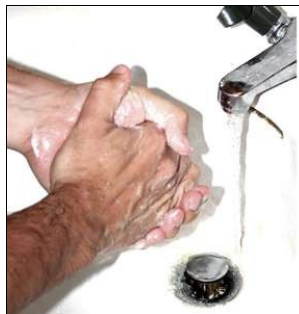
When to wash your hands: As you touch people, surfaces and objects throughout the day, you accumulate germs on your hands. In turn, you can infect yourself with these germs by touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Although it's impossible to keep your hands germ-free, washing your hands frequently can help limit the transfer of bacteria, viruses and other microbes.

Always wash your hands before:

- Preparing food
- Eating
- Treating wounds or giving medicine
- Touching a sick or injured person
- Inserting or removing contact lenses

Always wash your hands after:

- Preparing food, especially raw meat or poultry
- Using the toilet
- Touching an animal or animal toys, leashes or waste
- Blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing into your hands
- Treating wounds
- Touching a sick or injured person
- Handling garbage or something that could be contaminated, such as a cleaning cloth or soiled clothing



FLU SHOT:

Your best bet for avoiding influenza



The single best way to protect against the flu is to get vaccinated each year. Getting a flu shot is one important thing you can do to protect yourself from coming down with the flu.

This year's annual flu shot will offer protection against the pandemic H1N1 flu (swine flu) virus, in addition to two other influenza viruses that are expected to be in circulation this fall and winter. Here are the answers to common questions about flu shots .

What is influenza and what are the symptoms?

Influenza is a contagious respiratory infection that can cause serious complications, especially to older adults. Call your doctor if you have the symptoms listed below: **Fever (usually high), Headache, Tiredness (can be extreme), Cough, Sore throat, Runny/stuffy nose, Body aches.**

When should I get the flu vaccine?

It is recommended that people get their seasonal flu vaccine as soon as it becomes available in their community. It is best to get it before December, but you can get vaccinated throughout the flu season which can begin as early as October and last as late as May.

Who should get the flu vaccine?

Anyone over the age of 6 months should get vaccinated. Vaccination is especially important for people at high risk of influenza complications, including the elderly. You shouldn't get a flu shot if you have had a bad reaction to the vaccine in the past, are allergic to chicken eggs, or have a fever that day. If you have a question about whether or not you should or shouldn't get vaccinated based on a health condition, call your doctor.

What are the vaccination options this year?

The flu vaccine comes in two forms:

A shot. A flu shot contains an inactivated vaccine made of killed virus. The injection is usually given in the arm. Because the viruses in the vaccine are killed (inactivated), the shot won't cause you to get the flu, but it will enable your body to develop the antibodies necessary to ward off influenza viruses.

A nasal spray. The nasal spray vaccine (FluMist) consists of a low dose of live, but weakened, flu viruses. The vaccine doesn't cause the flu, but it does prompt an immune response in your nose and upper, as well as throughout your body.

If you want more information on the above two vaccination options, call Debby, your wellness nurse.

Can the vaccine give me the flu?

No. The flu vaccine can't give you the flu, but you might develop flu-like symptoms — despite getting a flu shot — for a variety of reasons. You might be having a reaction to the vaccine and get muscle aches and fever for a day or two afterwards. Since it takes two weeks for the shot to take full effect, you may develop the flu during that timeframe. You could catch a strain of flu that the vaccine doesn't protect against because flu vaccines aren't 100%. Lastly, you may get sick after the vaccine simply because you could be coming down with a common cold which can also produce flu-like symptoms. So, don't be quick to blame it on the flu vaccine!

Can I lower my risk of the flu without getting a flu shot?

With or without a flu shot, you can take steps to help protect yourself from the flu and other viruses. Good hygiene remains your primary defense against contagious illnesses.

- Wash your hands often and thoroughly with soap and water.
- Use an alcohol-based sanitizer on your hands.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth whenever possible.
- Avoid crowds when the flu is most prevalent in your area

If you have a question about Medicare coverage or if you don't know where to get your flu vaccine, call your wellness nurse, Debby at (920) 954-8954 Ext 2115.

COMBAT GERMS. . . .Use Disinfective Wipes

The use of everyday disposable disinfecting wipes is on the increase, especially during the flu and cold season. Whether you live in community at a friary or if you live on your own, it would be a good idea to pick up a canister of these wipes the next time you are out shopping. The wipes have instructions on where it is safe to use them. Some areas that are highly contaminated with germs include:

- ☑ Countertops
- ☑ Sinks
- ☑ Faucet handles
- ☑ Toilet handles
- ☑ Cabinet knobs
- ☑ Telephones
- ☑ Computer keyboards
- ☑ Light switches
- ☑ TV remotes
- ☑ Door knobs



As you move about the kitchen tomorrow morning, take note of how many things you touch just in a short time as you prepare your breakfast. One big culprit harboring bacteria...the refrigerator handle. Have a canister of wipes sitting out in the open so others are reminded to grab one and put it to use as they are passing through.

Remember, it is recommended that one wipe be applied in one application to one surface, then thrown away. This will help prevent the transfer of bacteria to other surfaces.

Medication

Education



Several friars throughout the Province are taking some of the same medications. In each newsletter, I will feature a common medication and provide a quick review. In this newsletter, I will provide an overview of a prescription anti-viral medication that treats influenza.

Medication Hint

Oftentimes, when I receive a refill of a medication, the new pills look completely different than the ones I previously received. If this happens to you, do not assume that the medication is correct. Please call your pharmacist to confirm the identity of the pill. You can also call me and I can help identify the medication using the internet.

Tamiflu/Relenza

Reasons for use:

Lessens symptoms and shortens the time you are sick by 1 or 2 days. Also can prevent serious flu complications, like pneumonia. For people with a high risk medical condition, treatment with an antiviral drug can mean the difference between having a milder illness versus a very serious illness that could result in a hospital stay.

When to take antiviral drugs for treatment:

Studies show that flu antiviral drugs work best for treatment when they are started within 2 days of getting sick. However, starting them later can still be helpful, especially if the sick person has a high risk health condition or is very sick from the flu. Follow instructions for taking these drugs.

Length of treatment with this medication:

To treat the flu, Tamiflu® and Relenza® are usually prescribed for 5 days; some people hospitalized with the flu may need the medicine for longer than 5 days.



Dr. Donohue's response to flu shot question



Dear Dr. Donohue: I have some questions on flu and the flu vaccine. I don't intend to get the vaccine. I have had the flu a couple of times, and all it amounted to was a day of diarrhea. I don't need a vaccine for that. I also have heard that the vaccine can paralyze you. If I should change my mind, when is the best time to get it? How long does it last? - R.T.

Answer: Flu, influenza, is a serious illness. Around 36,000 Americans die from it every year. It's a respiratory illness, not a digestive-tract illness. It comes on suddenly and causes a cough with a high temperature. Muscles ache. The symptoms are much more dramatic than those of the common cold. Sick people take to their beds because they feel so terrible. Diarrhea is not a common sign of flu. It's true that the swine flu might cause loose stools for a day or two, but the other flu viruses do not home in on the digestive tract. "Intestinal flu" is a misnomer.

The flu vaccine, while not perfect, does work well for most people. If a vaccinated person catches the flu, symptoms are less serious and less prolonged. Reactions to the vaccine aren't common, and they're mostly minor - like swelling at the injection site or a day or so of muscle discomfort.

In the late 1970s, there was an outbreak of a variant form of flu; some people, after getting the vaccine, developed Guillain-Barre syndrome, an illness that can cause temporary paralysis. Whether there was a cause-and-effect relation to the vaccine wasn't established.

It takes two weeks for a person to develop protective antibodies against the flu after receiving the vaccine. The flu season lasts from November to May. Anytime during that period is the time to get the vaccine, but the earlier the better. Protection lasts through the entire season. [herald-review.com]



Debby's Reflection Corner....

I'm getting much more "settled in" with my position as your new Wellness Director. I might consider myself "new" for quite some time because every day I learn something new or have a very meaningful ex-

perience. However, this learning does not come in the form of working with new medical technology nor learning about new medical breakthroughs.

My learning comes from a conversation with a Capuchin taking the time to come to me and share a story about his childhood, his family, his life as a Capuchin friar, his travels and past ministry experiences. Visiting the Capuchin friaries and ministries around the Province has given me a new appreciation for the Capuchin commitment to devote their time and energy toward serving God's poor and less fortunate.

To the friars I haven't had a chance to spend time with, I look forward to talking with you and getting to know you. Although I work in Appleton the majority of the time, I am just a phone call away if there's anything you need.

I remain very grateful every day as I walk into the friary to begin another fun and fulfilling day as your "new" Wellness Director.

One last reminder:

Please be sure that you have an updated medication list available in case of emergency. Your local minister should have a copy and you should carry a copy in your wallet.