



## **NSC ~ SAWHORSE ADVISORY #41 – October, 2018**

The management of **NSC** is pleased to offer this **SAWHORSE ADVISORY**. This is part of our continuing effort to ensure that our workforce remains as safe as humanly possible, both on and off the **NSC** worksite.

### **7 Ways to Flu-Proof Your Home**

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Fighting the flu

It happens all the time: One family member gets the flu, and before you know it, everyone else has it too. Flu germs can spread even before symptoms appear, and **you can infect others up to a week after you first become sick**. By practicing a few simple rules at home, you can help keep your family healthy and prevent the flu from spreading.

#### **1. Get vaccinated**

Health experts say getting vaccinated is the single most important thing you can do to prevent the flu. There are now four main types of seasonal flu vaccine. The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) recommends that everyone 6 months and older who hasn't had a previous bad reaction or doesn't have egg or mercury allergies get a flu vaccination.

The [Food and Drug Administration \(FDA\)](#) has recommended the specific types of flu shots for the following people:

**Standard flu shot:** This is recommended for everyone 6 months and older.

**Intradermal flu shot:** The intradermal flu shot is administered into the skin, rather than the muscle. It uses a smaller needle and less antigen. The [FDA](#) recommends it for adults aged 18-64.

**High-dose flu shot:** Our immune system responses weaken with age. This vaccine may help improve immune response and increase prevention of the flu. A clinical trial of 31,000 older adults reported by the [U.S. National Institutes of Health](#) showed approximately 25 percent fewer cases of the flu in those who received the high-dose flu shot, compared to those who had the standard flu shot.

**Nasal spray vaccine:** There is some debate over the nasal spray vaccine for the 2016-2017 flu season. The [CDC](#) recommended against it, saying the nasal spray is less effective than the flu shot. However, it

was still approved by the [FDA](#), which says its benefits outweigh any risks. The FDA recommends the vaccine for people aged 2-49.

### **Are there any side effects from the flu vaccine?**

The flu vaccine in any form does not cause the flu virus. However, some people may experience mild symptoms after receiving the flu shot, such as:

- fever
- headache
- chills
- soreness at the injection site

These symptoms are usually mild and go away within one to two days. Talk to your doctor before receiving the vaccine if you're severely allergic to eggs or mercury, or if you've had a negative reaction to a vaccine in the past.

It's best to schedule your family's vaccinations in the fall before the start of flu season, preferably in October or November. But it's never too late to get the flu shot. Flu shots are now administered in many local grocery stores and pharmacies with no appointment required.

## **2. Cover coughs and sneezes**

Flu germs are believed to spread through droplets from the mouth and nose. Use a tissue to cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze. Make sure to throw the tissue away immediately and wash your hands straight away. If there's no tissue handy, cough or sneeze into the crook of your elbow.

## **3. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth**

According to the [CDC](#), flu germs can live for two to eight hours on hard surfaces. That's why it's so easy to pick up flu germs without knowing it. You can get infected if you touch an infected doorknob or light switch and then rub your eyes or bite your nails. Learning to keep your hands away from your face can be tough, especially for children. Remind them often, as well as yourself.

## **4. Wash your hands often**

All hand washing is not equal. For it to be effective, make sure you and your family follow these steps:

- Run warm water over your hands.
- Add soap.
- Scrub for at least 20 seconds.
- Rinse and dry.

You can stock up on alcohol-based hand sanitizers for areas where sinks aren't available or when you're out and about. Store them out of the reach of young children and ensure children have adult supervision when using them. Make sure your hand sanitizers are at least [60 percent alcohol](#), and remember that they're not a replacement for washing your hands with soap and warm water — they don't tackle all germs, and don't work on visibly dirty hands.

You'll need to remind kids to wash up:

each time they use the bathroom

before they eat

after they come home from school or a play date

## **5. Limit contact with family members who are ill**

If someone in your family does get the flu, take these steps to prevent the flu from spreading:

Keep the sick person at home.

Limit close contact between the sick person and other family members as much as you can while they're contagious. In general, this is up to a week after they show symptoms.

Change sleeping arrangements, if possible.

You should also avoid sharing the following items from the sick person:

washcloths

towels

dishes

toys

utensils

## **Clean your home**

Flu germs and viruses love to lurk on items you touch every day. Here are some hot spots for germs:

kitchen sponges

dishcloths

cutting boards

home desks

floors

sinks

toilets

Clean and disinfect these hot spots regularly. You can microwave your kitchen sponge for one minute on a high setting to zap germs. Better yet, throw it out.

If someone in your household has the flu, take special care when washing their things. Wash dishes and silverware thoroughly by hand or in the dishwasher. You don't have to do a sick person's laundry separately, but try to avoid scooping up an armload of items and holding them close before washing them. Use laundry soap and dry on a hot setting. Always wash your hands immediately after handling dirty laundry.

## **7. Practice healthy habits**

Don't forget the power of a healthy lifestyle to fight off sickness. The following tips can go far in keeping your immune system healthy and your family well this flu season.

Get plenty of sleep.

Eat well, with lots of vegetables and fruits.

Drink lots of fluids.

Exercise regularly.

Manage your stress.

## **The takeaway**

Vaccination is the single most important thing you can do to keep the flu from spreading. Healthy personal hygiene habits and frequent housecleaning also go a long way to help keep the flu away. If someone in your household does get the flu, keep the person at home, disinfect and clean your home well, and limit close contact with that person whenever possible.

