Health Tips to Prevent the Spread of Germs and the Flu this Holiday Season

PRSA Health Academy shares information from the Centers for Disease Control as it launches partnership with Operation Santa’s Stocking

• **Keep the germs away:**
  1. Wash your hands before eating, or touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
  2. Wash your hands after touching anyone who is sneezing, coughing or blowing their nose.
  3. Don’t share things like towels, lipstick, toys, or anything else that might be contaminated with respiratory germs.
  4. Don’t share food, utensils or beverage containers with others.

• **Prevent the spread of germs and the flu:**
  1. Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when sneezing, coughing or blowing your nose.
  2. Discard used tissues in the trash as soon as you can.
  3. Always wash your hands after sneezing, blowing your nose, or coughing, or after touching used tissues or handkerchiefs.
  4. Use warm water and soap to wash your hands. If you don’t have soap and water, use alcohol-base hand gel or disposable wipes.
  5. Try to stay home if you have a cough and fever.
  6. See your doctor as soon as you can if you have a cough and fever, and follow their instructions.
  7. If you have the flu, take medicine as prescribed and get lots of rest.

• **CDC urges you to take the following actions to protect yourself and others from influenza (the flu):**
  1. **Take time to get a flu vaccine.**
     - CDC recommends a yearly flu vaccine as the first and most important step in protecting against flu viruses.
     - While there are many different flu viruses, the flu vaccine protects against the three viruses that research suggests will be most common.
     - The [2010-2011 flu vaccine](#) will protect against an influenza A H3N2 virus, an influenza B virus and the 2009 H1N1 virus that caused so much illness last season.

  2. **Take everyday preventive actions to stop the spread of germs.**
     - If you are sick with flu–like illness, CDC recommends that you stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone except to get
medical care or for other necessities. (Your fever should be gone without the use of a fever-reducing medicine.)

- While sick, limit contact with others as much as possible to keep from infecting them.

3. **Take flu antiviral drugs if your doctor prescribes them.**

   - If you get the flu, antiviral drugs can treat your illness.
   - Antiviral drugs are different from antibiotics. They are prescription medicines (pills, liquid or an inhaled powder) and are not available over-the-counter.
   - Antiviral drugs can make illness milder and shorten the time you are sick. They may also prevent serious flu complications.
   - It’s very important that antiviral drugs be used early (within the first two days of symptoms) to treat people who are very sick (such as those who are hospitalized) or people who are sick with flu symptoms and who are at increased risk of severe flu illness, such as pregnant women, young children, people 65 and older and people with certain chronic health conditions.
   - Flu-like symptoms include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people may also have vomiting and diarrhea. People may be infected with the flu, and have respiratory symptoms without a fever.