

# Mandatory stand-up talk

*Jan. 15, 2004*

## Prevention of Upper Respiratory Infections

*Managers must deliver this stand-up talk on the prevention of upper respiratory infections to all available employees, beginning immediately and repeating as necessary until all employees have received this message.*

Winter is the time when colds, flu, sore throats and similar illnesses make many people feel miserable. Doctors often refer to these illnesses as upper respiratory infections or URIs. For most of us, these URIs are a temporary inconvenience, with non-life-threatening symptoms that pass quickly. However, for those with underlying medical conditions like diabetes, asthma, or heart disease, URIs can produce serious health complications. This safety talk gives you some tips that can help you avoid getting sick with a URI this winter.

### **What is a URI?**

Upper respiratory infections can affect various parts of your respiratory system – lungs, bronchial tubes, throat, mouth and nose. Most URIs are caused by viruses. Cold and flu medicines can't kill viruses, but they help us feel better by managing the symptoms. Our body's natural defenses usually overwhelm the virus after a few days, and the illness is over.

### **How do URIs spread?**

URIs, or the viruses that cause them, normally spread from person to person by direct physical contact, or by respiratory droplets expelled during coughs and sneezes. You can also catch a URI by touching contaminated objects that have been handled or sneezed on by an infected person. The virus is transferred to your hands, and then gets inside you if you touch your mouth, nose or eyes.

### **How Can I Protect Myself?**

1. Optimize your current health status:
  - Get a flu shot. A flu shot won't prevent all the different types of URIs, but it does reduce your chances of getting the flu. If you still get the flu, the shot usually makes the symptoms less severe.
  - Maintain a healthy lifestyle. A healthy diet, daily exercise and adequate rest will help your body fight off illnesses.
  - If you have a chronic health condition like heart disease, asthma, or diabetes, work with your Doctor to keep it under control. This means

taking required medications, and following your Doctor's recommendations for diet, exercise and rest.

2. Practice good personal hygiene:

- Wash your hands frequently. Use soap and warm water, or a waterless hand sanitizer liquid. This kills any viruses that might get on your hands if you touch contaminated objects.
- Don't rub your mouth, nose or eyes with your hands. Touching or rubbing these mucous membranes can allow the virus to get inside your body.
- Cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze. If you happen to be sick, this reduces the spread of droplets and helps protect the people around you.