

THE FLU AND YOU

Protecting Yourself This Season

(NAPSA)—Cold and flu season comes annually, but this year it has received more attention than normal as the public, as well as governments, physicians and scientists, show concern about a new and very different flu virus: the H1N1 strain. Each year, as many as 20 percent of Americans get the flu. Experts at the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) point out that Americans are being urged this year to take extra precautions as physicians believe that the H1N1 virus may cause more people to get sick than during a regular flu season.

According to Dr. Robert Siegel of the James J. Peters VA Medical Center, Bronx, N.Y., and associate professor at the Mount Sinai School of Medicine, New York, N.Y., “Simple steps such as regularly washing your hands with soap, covering your mouth with tissue when you sneeze or cough, avoiding contact with others who are sick, and, of course, getting the yearly flu shot are all easy, effective and inexpensive ways to protect yourself from catching a cold or the flu.”

Know the Signs and Symptoms

It is important for people to be aware of their symptoms. If these seem to last longer than usual or get worse, such as difficulty breathing or chest pains, they should see their doctor and prop-



erly communicate their symptoms because it could mean that they have a serious bacterial infection such as pneumonia, the CDC says. Each year, it adds, on average, 36,000 people die from flu-related complications and more than 200,000 are hospitalized from flu-related causes.

The CDC also advises everyone to be aware of the signs and symptoms of the cold and flu. Symptoms of both the cold and flu are similar and may include fever, body aches, extreme tiredness, dry cough and a runny or stuffy nose. Generally, these symptoms are milder with a cold than the flu.

When Antibiotics Make Sense

Antibiotics are an important medical treatment, but they should not be used to treat the cold or flu unless a secondary bacterial infection develops. The CDC states that taking antibiotics

when you have a virus like the cold or flu does not help battle the infection and may do harm because it increases your risk of getting an infection later that resists antibiotic treatment. You should keep in mind that antibiotics treat illnesses caused by bacteria, not those caused by viruses.

“Only your doctor will know if you have a serious bacterial infection and if an antibiotic is needed,” said Dr. Siegel. “If antibiotics are necessary, your doctor will be able to tell you the one that is best for you.”

Dr. Siegel noted that as with any medicine, there are risks associated with all antibiotics, and it is important for patients to speak with their doctors to understand these risks as well as the benefits before receiving treatment.

It is important to talk with your doctor about your illness to determine the best course of action. You can also visit www.PriCara.com for more information.

Health Tip

It is important for people to be aware of their symptoms. If they seem to last longer than usual or get worse, such as difficulty breathing or chest pains, patients should see their doctor and properly communicate their symptoms because it could mean that they have a serious bacterial infection, which may require treatment with antibiotics.

