

COVERING YOUR COUGH

Why should I cover my cough?

- Respiratory illnesses like influenza, the common cold, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), and pneumonia are spread by coughing or sneezing.
- These viruses can be spread to others when the ill person coughs or sneezes into the air, or into their hands and then contaminates surfaces and objects.
- These illnesses spread easily in crowded places where people are in close contact.

How do I stop the spread of germs if I am sick?

- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.
- Put your used tissue in the waste basket.
- If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve or elbow, **not into your hands.**
- You may be asked to put on a facemask to protect others.
- Wash your hands often with soap and warm water for 20 seconds.
- If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Do not share eating utensils, drinking glasses, towels or other personal items.
- Clean and disinfect surfaces and objects that could be contaminated by the ill person.

How can I stay healthy?

- **Get vaccinated!** Vaccines are available for diseases that can be transmitted through coughing or sneezing including: seasonal influenza, pneumococcal, pertussis (whooping cough), diphtheria, measles, mumps, rubella, and *Haemophilus influenzae*.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick. When you are sick, keep your distance from others to protect them from getting sick too.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
- Wash your hands often with soap and warm water for 20 seconds.
- If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.
- Do not share eating utensils, drinking glasses, towels or other personal items.
- Clean and disinfect surfaces and objects that could be contaminated by the ill person.

Influenza prevention instructions for the school and child care setting:

<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/school/index.htm>

CDC "Cover Your Cough" poster:

http://www.cdc.gov/flu/pdf/protect/cdc_cough.pdf

Questions?

Contra Costa County
Communicable Disease Programs
(925) 313-6740
<http://cchealth.org/cd/>

