What’s on the Horizon for Public Health?

Covering Flu and Faces

First - What CDC says about influenza:
We’ve are using some words in new ways the past six months. Words like social distancing and dashboard and face coverings. Now we are adding another: “Twindemic.” Health experts say more COVID-19 cases coupled with the impending flu season could create a deadly "Twindemic." Centers for Disease Control (CDC) Director Robert Redfield MD said the United States could be facing the "worst fall" that "we've ever had," because of the overlap between the COVID-19 pandemic and flu season.

CDC health experts are encouraging people to get an annual flu shot. Flu vaccinations won’t prevent people from getting coronavirus, but could help ease the strain on medical resources. Flu vaccine has been shown to reduce the risk of flu illness, hospitalization and death. Getting a flu vaccine this fall will be more important than ever. It will reduce your risk from flu but also help conserve health care resources.

Flu vaccine will be readily available. Manufacturers have projected they'll produce 194-198 million doses for the 2020-21 flu season. By comparison 175 million doses were produced during the 2019-2020 flu season. Flu season peaks between December and February.

COVID-19 and influenza share some symptoms, but with the flu it’s less common to have breathing problems. COVID-19 tends to come on gradually, while influenza hits hard and fast. Flu shots will be available in many different local locations in the next few months. Please get vaccinated.

Second - What Doctors say about masks:
As mask mandates increase, some people are seeking medical notes to opt out of wearing one. "It's very rare for someone to need an exemption," says Albert Rizzo MD, chief medical officer for the American Lung Association and a lung specialist in Newark, DE.

The COVID-19 virus spreads mostly by respiratory droplets released when people talk, cough or sneeze. Wearing a face covering will help to protect the people around you, if you are infected and do not know it. CDC recommends that people should wear a face covering in public to limit the spread of respiratory droplets, especially in situations where social distancing is hard to maintain. This CDC website has more information: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/about-face-coverings.html

Choose masks that cover completely both your nose and mouth, have two or more layers of washable, breathable fabric and fit snugly against the sides of your face and don’t have gaps. Other types of shields and coverings may not be as effective. Wearing face coverings has proven effective as a means of protecting others over the years. They have been used to protect people from other diseases such as tuberculosis and influenza.

Mical Raz MD, a professor in public policy and health at the University of Rochester, Rochester, NY suggests wearing the mask for longer and longer periods of time helps to get used to it. Parents can suggest kids wear a mask when doing something they like, such as watching television, so they equate it with something pleasant. Switching to a different kind of mask or one that fits better can also help.

Minnesota has a mask mandate for public indoor spaces. By wearing face coverings we can reduce the spread of COVID-19. Visit www.health.state.mn.us for more information.

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