



**American
Red Cross**

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NEWS RELEASE

Don't Let the Flu Ruin Your Holiday

Red Cross Offers Steps to Help Avoid Illness During the Thanksgiving Weekend

LUMBERTON, NJ November 20, 2009 — With H1N1 flu causing illness all across the country, the American Red Cross has some steps to take that will lessen the chances of getting sick over the long Thanksgiving holiday weekend.

"Thanksgiving is a time to enjoy being with family, not to be in bed with the flu," said Sharon Stanley, chief nurse of the American Red Cross. "You can follow easy tips to try and avoid becoming ill over the upcoming holiday."

Thanksgiving is one of the busiest travel periods in the United States. If traveling for the holiday or hosting a family celebration, washing one's hands as often as possible is important to help ward off illness. The Red Cross offers the following ideas to help halt the spread of the flu virus during the Thanksgiving holiday:

Tips for Travelers

Before traveling...

- If sick, stay home. It's disappointing not to be able to join in the family celebration, but act responsibly and stay home to avoid spreading the flu.
- It's possible to spread the flu virus one day before actually showing symptoms. Those who have been in close contact with a sick individual should be extra careful about using good hand hygiene and cough etiquette and very aware of what might be flu symptoms.

While traveling...

- Wash hands with soap and water as often as possible. If soap and water aren't available, use hand sanitizer with at least 60 percent alcohol.
- Use sanitizing wipes to disinfect hard surfaces such as airplane tray tables, luggage handles, cell phones, door handles and seat armrests.
- Remember to wash hands or use a hand sanitizer *before* eating any meals or snacks. It's important to remember that you are touching a lot of surfaces that others are touching as well. Make sure your hands are clean before you put anything into your mouth.
- Bring personal blankets, pillows and earphones to avoid using something which may have been in contact with the flu virus.
- After washing hands in a public restroom, turn off the faucet with a paper towel. Then use another paper towel to dry hands and open the door when exiting the restroom.

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Have a safe celebration

Thanksgiving is all about food, family and friends. Here are some steps that will help keep the celebration happy and healthy:

- Avoid the usual kisses and handshakes when greeting friends and family.
- If hosting the holiday dinner and someone in the household becomes ill, make sure that they can be isolated into a separate area for care, or ask another family member to host dinner to avoid spreading the flu.
- Wash hands frequently, before preparing food, while cooking, and especially before eating.
- Keep plenty of hand soap in the bathroom, preferably in a pump container. Skip the pretty hand towels this year and instead use disposable hand towels or a roll of paper towels.
- Consider putting the glasses away this year and using plastic cups, or provide a way for guests to identify their drinks. Don't drink out of anyone else's glass.
- Put serving utensils in every dish, including snacks like nuts, pretzels, etc. This allows people to spoon out their portion instead of reaching in with their hands.

Remember—always cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue and clean hands afterwards. If no tissue is available, cough or sneeze into the inside of the elbow or upper arm. Avoid touching the eyes, nose and mouth to prevent spreading germs. Visit Redcross.org for more information on how to keep safe and prepared for any emergency.

About the American Red Cross:

The American Red Cross shelters, feeds and provides emotional support to victims of disasters; supplies nearly half of the nation's blood; teaches lifesaving skills; provides international humanitarian aid; and supports military members and their families. The Red Cross is a charitable organization — not a government agency — and depends on volunteers and the generosity of the American public to perform its mission. For more information, please visit www.redcross.org or join our blog at <http://blog.redcross.org>.