



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Monday, Nov. 23, 2009
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Holiday travel: How to protect yourself and others from the flu
Oregon Public Health offers practical tips for healthy travel

As the holiday travel season begins, avoiding the flu in crowded terminals, stuffy planes and trains can be a challenge.

“Airplanes, trains and cars are close quarters but you can make travel safer with a few simple steps,” says Mel Kohn, MD, MPH, director of Oregon Public Health. “There are ways to protect yourself.”

Influenza virus is spread by droplets from coughs and sneezes. Studies have shown that flu viruses can survive on hard surfaces and can infect a person from two and eight hours after being left on items like cafeteria tables, door handles and airplane trays.

Several things people can do to ensure safe and healthy travel throughout the busy season:

- Travel only when you are feeling well so that you don’t spread the flu to others.
- Get vaccinated with a seasonal flu shot and, if you are in a target group, an H1N1 vaccine.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes with something other than your hand – like your elbow or a clean tissue.
- Avoid introducing germs into your body by not touching your face.
- Wash your hands frequently.

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- Carry alcohol-based hand sanitizer; if you're flying, remember that hand sanitizer, like all liquids, must be in a 3 oz. or smaller container, placed in a quart-sized clear plastic zip-top bag, and placed separately in a security bin for X-ray.
- Consider carrying sanitizing wipes to clean armrests and trays on public transportation.
- If you're traveling outside of the U.S., prepare for the possibility of health screening. China and Japan have screened passengers in the past and other countries may do the same if the pandemic becomes more concentrated. To avoid being detained abroad, don't travel while sick.
- Stay healthy by being physically active, eating a healthy diet and not smoking.
- Pack the toll-free Oregon Public Health Flu Hotline number; Oregonians can talk to a nurse about the flu from anywhere in the U.S.
- Bookmark the www.flu.oregon.gov Web site for the most current flu information.

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Oregon Public Health Division Mission: To protect and promote the health of all the people of Oregon.