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The Coronavirus is in the news and undoubtedly you have heard about it. While there are currently only 15 cases here in the United States, it is still a concern. The Coronavirus has sickened over 64,000 people worldwide and there have been at least 1,380 deaths.

While the coronavirus is a concern, the common flu remains active and should not be taken lightly.

The CDC estimates that so far this season there have been at least 26 million flu illnesses, 250,000 hospitalizations and 14,000 deaths from flu. The CDC expects the flu season to last for several more weeks. In Louisiana, there have been some 68,000 flu cases reported this flu season.

Prevention:

Flu:

- Get the flu vaccine. It is not too late to be vaccinated.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- While sick, limit contact with others as much as possible to keep from infecting them.
- If you are sick with flu-like illness, CDC recommends that you stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone except to get medical care or for other necessities. (Your fever should be gone for 24 hours without the use of a fever-reducing medicine.)
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. After using a tissue, throw it in the trash and wash your hands.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Clean and disinfect surfaces and objects that may be contaminated with germs like flu.

Coronavirus:

There is currently no vaccine to prevent 2019-nCoV infection. The best way to prevent infection is to avoid being exposed to this virus. However, as a reminder, CDC always recommends everyday preventive actions to help prevent the spread of respiratory viruses, including:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Stay home when you are sick.

- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.
- Follow CDC's recommendations for using facemasks.
    - CDC does not recommend that people who are well wear a facemask to protect themselves from respiratory viruses, including 2019-nCoV.
    - Facemask should be used by people who show symptoms of 2019 novel coronavirus, in order to protect others from the risk of getting infected. The use of facemasks is also crucial for health workers and people who are taking care of someone in close settings (at home or in a health care facility).
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
    - If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Always wash hands with soap and water if hands are visibly dirty.

Preventing both the Flu and the Coronavirus involve practical measures that we should all be taking. Washing hands, staying away if you are sick, disinfecting surfaces, and covering your cough or sneeze are essential.

Lastly, relying on credible sources for information is key. The CDC and Louisiana Department of Health provide updates regarding infectious diseases daily. Don't rely on hearsay for your information regarding Flu or Coronavirus.

For further information, contact the CDC at www.cdc.gov or www.ldh.la.gov.