



Guardian

Environmental Health & Safety
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Fall Semester 2004

Cold and Flu Season

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The weather has cooled off here in north Florida and with the change in temperatures comes the increase in days missed from work. Unfortunately it is usually not for pleasure but due to cold and flu season. In order to keep everyone happily at work, public health officials have advocated getting vaccinated against influenza or the "flu". Since the announcement of the inactivated flu vaccine shortage, managing the available doses has brought about changes in who should get the flu shot and how to stretch the current supply.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (www.cdc.gov/flu) have revised the guidelines about who should get the flu vaccine this season:

- Children ages 6 months to 23 months
- People who are 65 years and older
- People 2 years or older who have underlying, long-term illness such as metabolic diseases and weakened immune systems
- Women who will be pregnant this season
- People who live in nursing homes or other chronic-care places
- People who are 6 months to 18 years old who take aspirin daily
- Health-care workers who take care of patients
- People who have or take care of babies under 6 months (**DO NOT** give babies under 6 months old a flu shot)



Because of the shortage, healthy people between 2 and 64 years of age should skip getting a shot this season. However, alternatives are available and you should contact your physician to learn more.

Locally, the Florida Department of Health (www.doh.state.fl.us) has received about 300,000 doses of vaccine and is distributing them through county health units by appointment only. Here on campus, Thagard Student Health Center will only give the flu shot to those students with asthma, diabetes, heart or kidney disease, blood disorders, weakened immune systems, and those using long-term steroid or aspirin therapy.

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So what to do if you don't get vaccinated this season? When it comes to communicable diseases, the best defense is a good offense. The common cold and the flu spread through respiratory droplets from coughing and sneezing. It usually spreads from person to person though; occasionally a person may become infected by touching something with the virus on it and then touching their mouth or nose. To keep the spread of cold and flu germs to a minimum, follow these simple tips:

- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you sneeze or cough, throw the tissue away and clean your hands
- Wash your hands often with soap and water especially after sneezing or coughing yourself or taking care of a young child. If no soap and water is available, use an alcohol based hand cleaner
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth
- Stay away as much as you can from people who are sick

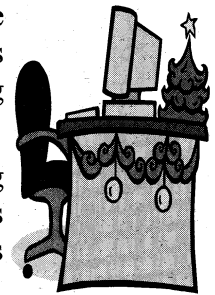
And if all of the above fails and you do get sick, get plenty of rest, drink lots of fluids, and avoid alcohol and tobacco. This means staying home from work if you are sick. Nobody at the office or school wants to get sick from you and vice versa.

Although colder weather brings flu season, it also reminds us the holiday season is fast approaching so start getting prepared and enjoy the holiday rush.

Computer Workstations: An Ergonomic Guide

We rely on technology for daily operations. Today, more than half of employed adults in the United States use a computer on the job. To create an appropriate environment for using this equipment, it's important to recognize and control potential ergonomic hazards. Following some basic steps can minimize computer-related discomfort and injury.

Supervisors need to take responsibility for purchasing and correctly installing task-appropriate equipment. These factors, paired with general and task-specific ergonomics training, can help improve the comfort and productivity of staff. Some critical components of a computer operator's workstation include:



- **Monitor:** The monitor should be placed directly in front of the user at a preferred viewing distance of 18-24 inches. The top of the screen should be positioned no higher than the user's eyes. The screen should have the capability to swivel horizontally and elevate vertically to allow the user to select a comfortable viewing angle.
- **Mouse/keyboard:** The keyboard should also be positioned directly in front of the user. The mouse should be placed at the user's side allowing the arms to remain close to the body, maintaining a straight line between hand and forearm. A height-adjustable keyboard/mouse tray system is ideal for properly organizing components.
- **Chair:** The seat and backrest of the chair should support a comfortable posture permitting occasional variations in the sitting position. Chair height and backrest angle should be easily adjustable. When seated, the user should be able to rest the soles of his feet on the floor or footrest. The back of the knees should be slightly higher than the seat of the chair to allow proper blood circulation to legs and

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Extend Safe Practices To Include Extension Cords

Extension cords are commonly used both at work and at home. But defective, worn or damaged extension cords can result in equipment damage, fires, injury and even death. The following tips will help ensure a safer workplace when extension cords are used.

- Extension cords should never be used in place of permanent wiring.
- Use only UL-listed extension cords.
- Make sure all new or repaired extension cords are tested before being used.
- Make a visual inspection of extension cords before each use. Remove from service any cords that have damaged attachment plugs, or cracked or worn insulation.
- Only grounding-type extension cord sets should be used. Discard any cord that has the grounding prong missing or cut off.
- Never overload an extension cord electrically. If the cord is warm or hot to the touch, have a qualified person check the cord and the appliance being used.
- If cords must cross vehicle or personnel passageways, they should be protected against physical damage and moisture, and identified with appropriate warnings. Never use an extension cord in a place where it must pass through an exit doorway, hazardous storage area, fire barrier or standing water.
- If extension cords are fabricated, only qualified electricians should do the work.
- Never connect or disconnect an extension cord until all electrical load has been removed from the extension cord receptacle end.

When not in use, extension cords should be disconnected and neatly stored in an area where they will not be exposed to moisture or excessive hot or cold temperatures.

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feet. Armrests should also be adjustable to fit under work surfaces and allow for forearm support.

- **Lighting:** Adequate lighting is a necessity. A combination of diffused overhead light and operator-adjustable task/desk lighting works best. Workstations should be orientated so light sources do not reflect on the computer screen and are not in the users viewing field. Blinds or drapes should be available to block light from windows. Screen glare filters may also be considered.

To have you computer workstation evaluated, call us at 644-8177.

Holiday Decorations

At Work

- Natural vegetation (trees, wreathes, hay, straw, corn stalks, etc.) are not to be used as decorations.
- All lights, or other electrical devices should be UL listed, in good condition, and turned off at the end of the day.
- Extension cords should not be used for decorations.
- Decorations should not interfere with exit or emergency lights, exit doors or p a t h w a y s , extinguishers or sprinklers.
- Lit candles are not permitted in University facilities.

At Home

- If you have a natural Christmas tree, be sure to maintain its water level.
- If you have an artificial tree, be sure that it has a statement regarding its fire resistance.
- Be sure to use candles in a safe manner, never place them near other decorations or in a place where they could be jarred.

The Shock of a Lifetime

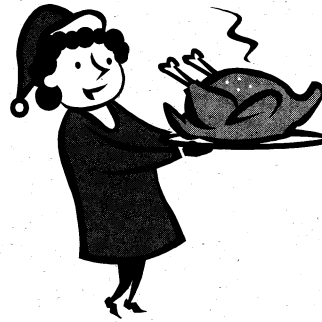
Approximately 250,000 Americans die each year from sudden cardiac arrest (SCA). In fact, a person's chance of survival is reduced by 7 to 10 percent for every minute spent waiting for a potentially life-saving defibrillation shock. The American Heart Association estimates that as many as 50,000 of these lives can be saved if an automated external defibrillator (AED) is available at the time of the emergency, and someone is nearby who has been trained to use it. At Florida State University (FSU), AED and personnel who are trained to use them can be found throughout campus.

Various departments now have AED units that are available to those who are trained to use them. AEDs are portable devices, which deliver an electric current to a person's heart that is going into sudden cardiac arrest. The AED will analyze the heart's rhythm to determine if a shock is advised. This shock is called defibrillation and may help reestablish an effective heart rhythm. The AED will charge to an appropriate energy level to administer the shock. When AEDs are used in conjunction with cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), a person's chance of survival increases greatly.

AED units and trained personnel can be found at: Thagard Student Health Center, FSU Police Department and patrol vehicles, Bobby E. Leach Center, Seminole Reservation, Seminole Golf Course, the University Athletic Department, and the Marine Laboratory.

Turkey Fryer Troubles

Here is a word of caution for any first time fryers. Some fryer instructions tell you the way to determine the right amount of oil is to place the turkey into the empty pot and then fill the pot with water, stopping about 1 inch from the top of the cooking pot. Next remove the turkey from the pot and place a mark where the new water line is. The problem with this method is that the oil expands more than water when heated. This could result in an overflow of oil resulting in a nice fire. So the best way to do this is to stop the water at 2 inches from the top of the pot giving the oil more room to expand. And we all know the idea was to fry the turkey not the entire area under your fryer.



**Happy
Holidays
From
EH&S**

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