

The Flu Shot vs. The Flu: It's Not Just About *You*

In addition to other sources, information in this article was edited and/or printed directly from the WV Department of Health and Human Resources website. See www.wvdhhr.org/immunizations/influenza.asp for specifics.

Okay tough people – you're bound and determined you're not going to get a flu shot. Read on ...

Health officials across the country are strongly warning citizens: This year's flu season is severe and has begun early.

The flu, or influenza, is a serious respiratory infection caused by Type A and Type B influenza viruses. *The flu is highly contagious and is normally spread through the mucous membranes in the mouth, nose, or eyes. When an infected person coughs/sneezes, the virus becomes airborne and can be inhaled by anyone nearby. It can also be spread when someone touches a virus-contaminated surface (such as a door-knob or faucet) and then touches his or her mouth, nose, or eyes.*

The flu virus generally takes 1-3 days after exposure before the infected person starts showing symptoms, and the onset is often sudden. People describe severe muscle aches and total body discomfort. Other common flu symptoms also include fever and chills, cough, headache, fatigue, and weakness. Some people also get a stuffy nose and sore throat.

It is important to understand the differences between the flu and a cold. Both conditions are viral infections and can cause symptoms such as coughing and sore throat. A cold is a minor viral infection of the nose and throat. The flu however is usually more severe, with higher fevers and the addition of aches and pains (see chart below).

A bad case of the flu can send a healthy person to bed for 3-5 days. The person will probably fully recover; however, cough and tiredness may persist for days or even weeks. For some people, it can be a more serious illness. Each year up to 40 million Americans develop the flu and about 150,000 are hospitalized. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that each year, 36,000 deaths result from the flu and its complications.

Anyone over age 50 and those of all ages with chronic illness (i.e., diabetes, heart disease, asthma or other lung disease, or HIV) are more likely to become seriously ill with flu. The same high-risk groups described here are at a greater risk for developing complications from the flu like

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IS IT A COLD or THE FLU?

SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

COLD

INFLUENZA (FLU)

Onset	Gradual	Sudden
Fever	Rare	Characteristic (101°F+); lasting 3-4 days
Cough	Hacking	Dry; can become severe
Headache	Rare	Prominent
Muscle aches/pains	Slight	Usual; often severe
Tiredness and weakness	Very mild	Can last 2-3 weeks
Extreme exhaustion	Never	Early; prominent
Chest Discomfort	Mild to moderate	Common
Stuffy Nose	Common	Sometimes
Sneezing	Usual	Sometimes
Sore Throat	Common	Sometimes



State Museum Set to Undergo Makeover

WV Culture and History Commissioner Nancy Herholdt has announced that the State Museum, located in the lower level of the Cultural Center, will close effective January 16 for renovations. When it reopens (expected in November 2004), it will be a state-of-the-art museum which will tell the State's history. Cost is estimated to be a combination of State and private funds, totaling \$7.45 million.

pneumonia, bronchitis, or sinus and/or ear infections. If you are over 50 or have a chronic disease, call your doctor at the first sign of the flu.

Because influenza is a viral infection, it cannot be treated or cured with antibiotics. Antibiotics are medicines that kill bacteria and are therefore only useful for treating bacterial infections. Your doctor may, however, prescribe an antiviral medication which must be taken within 1-2 days of the time the first symptoms appear. This medication may reduce the duration of fever and other symptoms, so contact your doctor at the first signs you are becoming ill with flu-like symptoms.

If you do get sick, rest is one of the most important treatments. And, when resting, you're probably at home where there's less risk that you'll spread it to others. You should also drink plenty of fluids. Hot liquids may relieve the feeling of congestion. A pain reliever like acetaminophen can be taken for aches and fever. ***Never give aspirin to a child under 12 who has the flu (or any other illness you suspect is caused by a virus) due to the risk of a serious adverse effect known as Reye's syndrome.*** Flu continues to be contagious for 3-4 days after symptoms appear.

In West Virginia, the flu season normally begins in mid-January and runs through early March, but cases are already being seen by State health officials and providers. To prevent getting influenza, or to lessen its severity, you must get a flu shot each fall. Will getting a shot guarantee you won't catch it? No – but it significantly decreases the risk, and if you do get sick, your symptoms will be milder and shorter in duration. And, even though a highly infective strain of the virus has been cropping up – Type A Fujian, which wasn't included in this year's vaccine – similar strains were included that should offer protection. The bottom

line is that getting a flu shot is your best chance for protection.

Still think you'll tough it out? Refer to the bolded text in paragraph 3 on the first page – the flu is highly contagious. Not only will a vaccination protect you, it's as well a safeguard for your family, friends, and anyone else with whom you may come in contact. Even though the shot takes around 14 days to take full prevention effect, it's not too

late, and the sooner you get it, the better. In addition, CDC Director Dr. Julie Gerberding reassures citizens that ***the vaccine is both safe and effective, and that you cannot catch the flu from the vaccine itself because it is made from dead viruses.***

Contact your primary care physician or local health department about getting a flu shot TODAY!

Get the CDC's Influenza Vaccine Information Sheet to answer many of your questions: www.cdc.gov/nip/publications/VIS/vis-flu.pdf

Wise Announces **FREE** Generic Drugs for Cold and Flu Season

From a press release issued by the Governor's Office.

Governor Bob Wise has directed the Public Employees Insurance Agency (PEIA) to once again waive the co-pay during during January, February, and March on certain generic antibiotics for members of its PPB Plan who have met their prescription deductible.

"With the cold and flu season hitting us especially hard this year, I want to help people as much as we can," Wise said. "Once PEIA members experience firsthand that generics are as effective as brand-name drugs, they will be more likely to use them in the future."

Last year, the use of generics rose 4.5%, resulting in a savings of nearly \$4.5 million. That doesn't include the savings individual members gained by not having responsibility for a co-pay.

Use of generic medications will save the agency and its members money. For every 1% of brand-name drug usage that moves to generic, PEIA saves at least \$1 million. PEIA hopes this program will continue to encourage physicians to prescribe more generics. The normal co-pay for generics is \$5; for preferred brand-name drugs, it's \$15 and \$30 for non-preferred.

PEIA Wins National Award

Reprinted from *PEIA News*
September 2003 issue

The Council of State Governments (CSG) based in Washington, DC chose PEIA to receive its Innovation Award during the Southern Legislative Conference held in August. PEIA's multi-state prescription drug purchasing program pools the collective buying power of several states and will save West Virginia \$25 million over the next three years. Governor Bob Wise commented, "We are pleased to be recognized for the creative solutions in governing that my administration has sought to better the lives of West Virginians." The CSG award is the only comprehensive, national awards program that focuses exclusively on state programs and policies and selects winners based on evaluations by state government leaders. Each year CSG receives hundreds of applications. CSG policy experts conduct an initial review and regional panels of state officials select the award winners from each of the four national CSG regions. "We have worked hard to contain the ever-rising costs of insurance for our members and this has been a most effective cost containment strategy," remarked PEIA Director Tom Susman. "This is a wonderful acknowledgment of the program."


Completing a DOP Position Description Form Takes Time/Thought


From time to time, it becomes necessary for the duties of a position to be reviewed. A Position Description Form (PD), also known as a CS-579, is an official description of the duties assigned to a position. The form can have many applications – not only is it used in position classification determinations, but it may be used during employee performance appraisal reviews to discuss duties and responsibilities. It can also be used as an orientation tool for new employees in learning the job or used by managers and supervisors as a recruitment tool when advertising vacant positions, and determining necessary minimum qualifications.


Rules require the agency appointing authority to inform the Division of Personnel (DOP) when significant changes occur in the duties assigned to a position. If the agency fails to notify the DOP, then an incumbent employee can request to have the position duties reviewed for proper classification.


Documentation of the position's duties is extremely important in determining the correct classification; therefore, the form should be completed with care. It may be helpful to keep a journal of tasks for a week or so before completing the form in order to be as thorough and complete as possible in listing all the duties and responsibilities assigned to the position.


The following text addresses specific line items of the form:

 Item 4 on the form requests the official title of position. **This is the title assigned by the Division of Personnel**, not an in-house title or the one you're requesting.

 Item 5 is the appropriate space to list the **working** title of the position. For example, the assigned title may be Office Assistant 1, while the working title within the agency may be Receptionist.


 Item 13 is to be used for a brief general description of the job. This section is used for an overview of the position and should be as clear and concise as possible while capturing the essential elements of the job. Do not go into a lot of detail in this section – two or three sentences should suffice. You might respond to this item as if answering the question "Why does this position exist?" You can be more descriptive when you respond to item 14.


 **Item 14 is one of the key components of the PD.** Take time to think about your responses. The manner in which you describe the job will play a key role in the DOP's analysis. List the information in your own words. **Do not copy the official Division of Personnel classification specification on the form. If you do this, the form will be returned to you, with no classification determination, for revision.** List your duties and responsibilities in order of importance. Be as specific as possible and do not use general terms. For example, do not list that you "handle" purchase orders. Do you mean that you open the mail, sort the orders, and forward them on to another person? Or do you review the orders, put codes on them, stamp them approved, and forward them onto another person? Explain your processes and procedures so clearly that anyone reading your description can visualize exactly what you are doing. It may be helpful to ask someone who is not familiar with your job to proofread the duties that you have listed and see if they can understand the work flow.

 It's also important to specify the **amount of time** spent on each duty and responsibility that you list on your form. If you can't estimate a percentage of time, then quantify the amount of expended time on each task in some form, i.e. hours, number of days, if only performed quarterly or annually, occasionally, or on an as-needed basis. If you're having trouble quantifying the time spent on







various tasks, again, keeping a task journal for a period of time and noting the amount of time spent on each task listed may clarify the issue for you.

If you need to attach additional paperwork to accurately describe your job, please do so. You don't need to confine your description to the page provided on the form. The more precise the information you provide, the more accurately your job can be analyzed.

 When you complete the section of the form that deals with assigned supervision of other employees, please review the check off boxes listed under Item 16. **In the classification plan, there is a specific meaning for supervision.** It must be an assigned responsibility and meet the elements of those areas listed under Item 16. If you checked 'yes' on Item 5 (that you supervise subordinate employees), and the various boxes under Item 16, you must list the names and titles of the employees you supervise so that your supervision can be verified.

 The items listed under the major accountabilities section of the form are designed to assist in determining the responsibilities assigned to the position per the incumbent employee's responses. Item 18 indicates if the position has responsibility for the accuracy and custody of funds, monies, or budgets for the agency. Please **do not** indicate 'yes' if the work is simply a step in the agency purchasing process where you do not make final decisions for spending, purchasing, or other financial obligations.

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-  Item 19 indicates whether the position has assigned responsibility for committing the agency to expend funds or a course of action where no additional review of the action is required. If you are not the final signature authority, **do not** indicate 'yes' on this item.
-  Item 20 deals with consequence of error of the position. Think of the work products of your position, and then what actually happens when or if you make an error or fail to produce the required product or service. What effect does this error have on the position, the work unit, or the agency?
-  Part 5 (Items 24-27) is to be completed by the immediate supervisor as an agency representative. In item 24, the supervisor should list in his/her own words what the agency considers to be the prime role of the position. In item 25, the supervisor should carefully review the part of the form completed by the employee. It is the supervisor's responsibility to the agency to make sure that the PD is accurate and complete. Make any corrections and/or additions necessary to achieve that accuracy. It is helpful if you note the item number completed by the incumbent employee and then explain the addition or exception. For example, if the employee checked 'yes' on supervision, but is not an immediate supervisor, the note might read "Item 15, employee does not have assigned immediate supervisory authority, but does act as a lead worker in the unit."
-  Item 26 is the most important question in the supervisor's section. 'Additional duties' means duties that have been assigned to the position that were not previously performed by the employee. **It does not mean performing the same duties at a higher or faster level of performance.**
-  Item 27 is an official representation on behalf of the supervisor's employing agency that the information listed on the form is accurate and complete. This is a responsibility of all supervisors and managers in any agency.
-  Items 28 and 29 are to be completed by the appointing authority. This is the person who has final authority to commit the agency to an action, for example, final hiring decisions. If, as an appointing authority, you are unsure about any information contained in the form, you should resolve your questions with employee and/or supervisor **before signing and submitting the form.**

For questions regarding completion of a PD, you can consult the Division of Personnel's website (www.state.wv.us/admin/personnel/clascomp/default.htm) for additional information. If you need more information, contact the Classification and Compensation Section at 558-3950, ext. 506.

Lottery Sends Gifts to Soldiers

Thanks to the West Virginia Lottery, 2,650 West Virginia Army and Air National Guard soldiers who are serving in Iraq or awaiting deployment received holiday packages. According to Lottery Director John Musgrave, the packages included a Lottery t-shirt and copies of the two music CDs produced by the Lottery (*Songs of Home* and *Songs for America*). These items remained from the Lottery's summer fairs and festivals promotions.

"The holiday gifts are symbols of appreciation for West Virginia's men and women who are sacrificing so much to serve our nation," said Musgrave. He noted that the Lottery has several employees who are National Guard members, and one Lottery Field Investigator is currently serving in Iraq.

Pencil In ...

Your photo here



The President's Commission on the U.S. Postal Service (USPS) is recommending that the USPS sell **personalized postage stamps**. If approved, you can have your picture, or that of your child, dog, garden ... anything you have a right to print ... turned into a postage stamp. Cost will be a bit more, but it's hoped that it will allow regular mail to compete with e-mail.



The deadline to apply for a **PROMISE Scholarship** is January 31. Application for a **West Virginia Higher Education Grant** must be made by March 1. Students may make application for either program online at www.wvapply.com.



All-day shuttle service at the Capitol Complex begins January 5 and will run through March 13 from 7 AM to 6:15 PM. Stops are made at various Capitol locations about every 10 minutes.