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For Immediate Release

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Cover Your Cough to Stop the Spread of Germs

The holiday season is in full swing and colds and influenza are circulating. Parties, travel and shopping all include risks of catching and spreading illness, which is why Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department (SWNPHD) is encouraging everyone to cover their coughs.

Coughing and sneezing into the air spreads germs to others. According to The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), people infected with a cold or flu can spread it to others up to 6 feet away. “After you cough or sneeze, germs can stay in the air for as long as 6 minutes and may be breathed in by others. Covering your cough or sneeze with a tissue or clothing keeps the germs out of the air,” explains Melissa Propp, Public Health Nurse for SWNPHD.

To help stop the spread of germs:

- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.
- Put your used tissue in the trash.
- If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve, not your hands.
- Wash your hands with soap and water after coughing, sneezing or blowing your nose. Be sure to scrub all surfaces of your hands for 20 seconds.
- Use alcohol-based hand sanitizer with 70% alcohol if soap and water are not available.
- Keep your hands away from your eyes, nose and mouth as these are places where viruses and bacteria can enter your body.
- Try to avoid others that are sick.

SWNPHD also wants to remind everyone to stay home when you are sick with a fever. This may mean having to miss the annual family or work gathering, but the people you could have made sick will be happy you chose not to share your germs. While you can't avoid every germ this season, do your part in stopping the spread by covering your coughs and sneezes for a happier and healthier holiday.

For more information contact Public Health Nurse Melissa Propp at 308-345-4223. SWNPHD serves Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Hayes, Hitchcock, Keith, Perkins and Red Willow counties. SWNPHD is located at 404 West 10th (one block north of Arby's) in McCook or 501 Broadway in Imperial (5th Street entrance). Information can also be found on SWNPHD's Facebook and Twitter.

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