

## Team of the Month: *Facility Services Department*

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# THE COLD AND FLU SEASON *When is a Doctor Necessary?*

Like the air we breathe, the cold virus will be with us always, and a healthy school-age child will average about five or six colds per year, according to Dr. Alfredo Negrete, an El Centro pediatrician. And that very air can be a major contaminant, because cold sufferers tend to sneeze into it, spreading germs like tiny bits of paper before a fan.

But the cold germ can also be spread by hand contact or just by playing childhood games where children come into close contact. That is why frequent hand washing is important. So is coughing and sneezing into a tissue, or at least covering the mouth and nose, to curtail the spread of the virus.

The perennial change from torrid desert summer temperatures to cooler fall and winter weather is cold and flu season and every mother of school age children is concerned about how to keep children healthy during this critical time. Other questions linger - when to call a doctor? When, what and how much over-the-counter medications to use?

Dr. Negrete describes a cold as a viral infection of the nose and throat resulting in a runny nose, low grade fever, sore throat and coughing or sneezing. Symptoms seldom last longer than five to seven days.

Flu, on the other hand, is more serious, he points out, caused by an influenza virus producing high fever, chills, body aches, coughing and congestion as well as difficulty in breathing. Elderly persons as well as children under two years of age and children with chronic diseases such as asthma or with heart problems are at risk.

"A yearly vaccination against the flu is the most effective preventive measure we have," Dr. Negrete says. "It will not protect against the common cold, but it will help prevent the dreaded flu."

He also explains that antibiotics do not cure colds or flu, but they are effective in treating secondary bronchial infections. A doctor is the best person to determine if an antibiotic is needed.

Symptoms that should prompt a visit to the doctor, Dr. Negrete advises, include fever higher than 101 degrees lasting two days



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or longer, a cough lasting a week or longer, breathing difficulty, wheezing and pain such as a severe sore throat

Dr. Negrete also says over the counter medications can be useful to alleviate some of the symptoms associated with colds and the flu. Acetaminophen or Ibuprofen will help alleviate fever as well as body aches. Nasal decongestants cough suppressants and antihistamines can also be helpful.

"Nevertheless," Dr. Negrete concludes, "If symptoms worsen or persist, visit your doctor."

For additional information about flu and cold season contact the El Centro Regional Medical Center Outpatient Centers, El Centro (760) 482-9100, or Calexico (760) 357-0508.



## Preventative Measures *for Heart Risk*

### A Baby Aspirin A Day For Those Over 50

Researching the Web for information on the benefits of baby aspirin as a heart attack or stroke preventative measure for persons over 50 is like getting stuck in the a spider's web. The inescapable conclusion is to see your doctor first before embarking on such a regimen.

Several years of research by scientists at Oxford University in England, encompassing 287 studies involving more than 200,000 people, found that one or two baby aspirin a day reduced the risk of heart attack or stroke by 25 per cent—even among patients with previous heart problems.

That is the upside. The downside appears to be an aspirin a day can double the risk for some, particularly those over 60, for gastrointestinal bleeding, reports Dr. Colin Baigent, of Oxford's Radcliffe Infirmary.

A report on the study calls it "a no brainer" for people at high risk of heart attack to take

a daily aspirin, but then it adds something of a disclaimer, "unless they are at high risk for aspirin's side effects."

"Aspirin reduces a person's risk of heart attack or stroke," writes Dr. Peter Elwood, chairman of the Welsh Aspirin Group of Cardiff University in Penarth, Wales. "Most people at risk of heart attack don't know it. "It would be an overall benefit if everyone over 50 simply went ahead and took a baby aspirin every day."

Aspirin with its blood thinning qualities has become something of a cornerstone in treatment of anyone who has had a heart attack or a stroke but is often bypassed for those with such complicating diseases as diabetes.

There also is some disagreement over whether the baby aspirin, with its 81

milligrams, or a full size aspirin, with 325 milligrams, is a more effective deterrent.

Doctors in the U.S. tend to take a cautious approach. Dr. David Atkins, chief medical officer at the Center for Outcomes and Evidence, part of the U.S. Agency for Healthcare Research and quality in Rockville, Md., wrote the guidelines for the use of aspirin to prevent heart attacks and stroke.

"The benefits of daily aspirin appear to be proportionate to a person's underlying cardiac risk," he told WebMD. "My advice is it isn't something that should be taken without some additional thought. It is not so hard to assess a person's heart risk. More and more guidelines say we should move beyond treating people at an age number and move toward treating the heart risk."

# ECRMC Salutes... Facility Services Department



Keeping the mechanical, electrical, and utilities of our hospital running smoothly is an ongoing effort. The hot months of the year present additional challenges that must be met. ECRMC would like to recognize the professionals in the Facility Services Department for their achievements in meeting these challenges. They often work under adverse weather conditions for long periods of time to keep our electricity, cool air, water and oxygen flowing for our patients, physicians, staff and visitors. Time and time again, they have demonstrated the ingenuity, tenacity, knowledge and skills required to tackle and solve demanding maintenance problems.

## Congratulations Team!

# Help Make a Difference



Job postings and applications are available in the Human Resources Department, Monday through Friday from 7:30 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. You may also view job postings and apply Online 24-hours a day on the web at [www.ecrmc.org](http://www.ecrmc.org).

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