

# How to protect yourself and others from flu during holiday travel

As the holiday travel season begins, avoiding the flu in crowded terminals, stuffy planes and trains can be a challenge.

"Airplanes, trains and cars are close quarters, but you can make travel safer with a few simple steps," said Mel Kohn, MD, MPH, director of Oregon Public Health. "There are ways to protect yourself."

Influenza virus is spread by droplets from coughs and sneezes. Studies have shown

that flu viruses can survive on hard surfaces and can infect a person from two to eight hours after being left on items like cafeteria tables, door handles and airplane trays.

Several things people can do to ensure safe and healthy travel throughout the busy season:

- Travel only when you are feeling well so you don't spread the flu to others.
- Get vaccinated with a seasonal flu shot and, if you are in

a target group, an H1N1 vaccine.

- Cover your coughs and sneezes with something other than your hand – like your elbow or a clean tissue.

- Avoid introducing germs into your body by not touching your face.

- Wash your hands frequently.

- Carry alcohol-based hand sanitizer; if you're flying, remember that hand sanitizer, like all liquids, must be in a 3

oz. or smaller container, placed in a quart-sized clear plastic zip-top bag, and placed separately in a security bin for X-ray.

- Consider carrying sanitizing wipes to clean armrests and trays on public transportation.

- If you're traveling outside of the U.S., prepare for the possibility of health screening. China and Japan have screened passengers in the past and other countries may do the same if the pandemic becomes more concentrated. To avoid being

detained abroad, don't travel while sick.

- Stay healthy by being physically active, eating a healthy diet and not smoking.

- Pack the toll-free Oregon Public Health Flu Hotline number (1-800-978-3040); Oregonians can talk to a nurse about the flu from anywhere in the U.S.

- Bookmark the Web site [www.flu.oregon.gov](http://www.flu.oregon.gov) for the most current flu information.

## Reduce your holiday financial stress

With the holidays approaching, many people begin to feel the financial stress of the season. You can lessen your anxiety by planning purchases in advance. Consider the following tips for a more enjoyable holiday season:

- Make a list of the people you will need to buy for and how much you plan to spend on each person.

- Determine how much in total you plan to spend, and if this figure seems too high, make adjustments in your planned purchases.

- Try to avoid the temptations of paying for all of your purchases with a credit card when you do not have the money to pay it in total. Avoid thinking that you'll "pay it off later."

- If you cannot afford a particular item, look for something similar but less expensive, or search for a different gift. Set a limit and stick to it.

- Be wary of department store promotions. Offers of "buy now and pay later" sometimes have hidden clauses that allow interest to accrue until

your first payment. Read through all the paperwork before signing it, and do not be afraid to ask the store clerk questions regarding the promotion. Remember, if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.

- Be creative with your gifts. Make homemade items or personalized gifts that offer your services for things such as an evening of free babysitting.

- A donation to a local charity may make more of a lasting impression than a store-bought gift. Use money that you would spend on friends and family to make one larger donation to one specific charity or give small donations to each family member's favorite charity.

- If you're hosting a family dinner, ask others to bring a dish.

- Pay attention to return policies for items you purchased. Keep your receipts. If you need to return something later, having your receipt will speed up the process and you will have a better chance of getting your money back.

- Shop alone. A tired spouse

or child may encourage you to impulsively buy some items so they can get home sooner.

- Avoid high-pressure sales tactics. Know what you're looking for before you enter a store or tell the sales clerk that you are looking and will let them know if you need help with something.

- Search through clearance racks for sale items. Shop at discount stores for gifts for children, neighbors, and co-workers.

- Don't wait for the last minute to do your shopping. You may be more tempted to purchase higher priced items if you are in a hurry or don't have time to comparison shop. If you spread your shopping out over time, you won't have to come up with so much money at once.

- After the holiday season, start saving for the next one. Put aside a little each month or look for sale items throughout the year that could be saved for the holiday season.

*Source: Suzi McGarvey, Extension Associate, University of Missouri Extension*

## How to assure your food gifts are safe

Safety is an important ingredient in holiday food gifts. Home-preserved foods can be inexpensive gifts, but make sure your products are safe. Check out the U.S.D.A. "Complete Guide to Home Canning" at [www.uga.edu/nchfp/publications\\_usda.html](http://www.uga.edu/nchfp/publications_usda.html).

Dried fruits and jams or jellies are usually safe options. Dried fruit should be pliable like leather, without pockets of moisture that promote growth of microorganisms. Package

them in freezer containers. Include instructions to freeze the fruit for long-term safety and freshness.

If you didn't dry fruit this summer, you can still make fruit leather. Make a puree of canned fruit and dry it in an oven or dehydrator. For instructions refer to: <http://extension.oregonstate.edu/catalog>.

Berries and other frozen fruit can be thawed and made into jam or jelly. Follow the pectin package instructions. Special

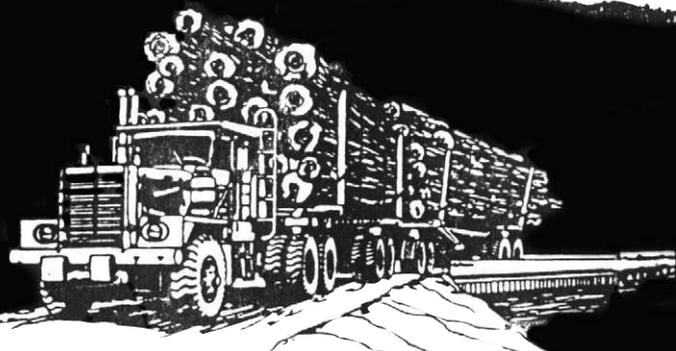
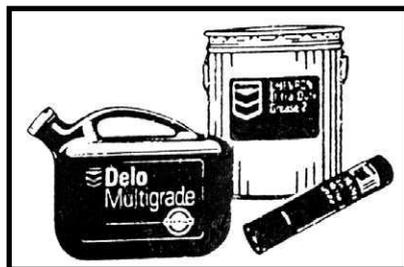
pectins are available for products lower in sugar. Fill sterilized jars with hot jam, adjust lids, and process for five minutes in a boiling water canner to seal and prevent mold growth. Consider putting home-preserved and home-baked foods in a decorated box or gift basket for an inexpensive gift. A loaf of fruit bread, a jar of jelly, and a roll of fruit leather would be welcomed.

Don't seal breads (such as **See Assure on page 21**)

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