



# Harris County Hospital District

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## MEDIA RELEASE

### **Should You Call in Sick, or Go to Work?**

HOUSTON (December 5, 2006) – Your eyes are itchy, your throat is scratchy and a cough is starting – it may be the beginning of a cold, or it could be allergies. Should you go to work or call in sick?

Flu and cold season is here, and experts at the Harris County Hospital District want you to make the healthy decision for both yourself and the people you come in contact with on a daily basis.

“Any time you experience a fever, you should stay home,” said Dr. Lisa Danek, medical director of the hospital district’s Northwest Health Center. “A fever indicates that your body is trying to fight off an infection. The infection may or may not be contagious, so don't take a chance of sharing it with your co-workers.”

Research shows that people sick with the common cold are not very productive. The National Foundation of Infectious Diseases estimates that, in a typical year, influenza or colds in the workplace may result in as much as \$10 billion in lost productivity.

So what should keep a person away from the office? It’s a good idea to stay home if you are experiencing a fever, persistent cough with mucus, body aches, congestion, or vomiting, say doctors. When is it all right to go to work? If you are experiencing sniffing without a fever (it could just be allergies), a dry cough, or a throat tickle.

According to the National Institutes of Health, people with colds are most contagious for the first two to three days, and usually not contagious a week after the onset of a cold.

If a sick person insists on going to work, Danek recommends they sneeze and cough into a tissue then immediately throw it away, as well as wash their hands regularly. As for co-workers, they should avoid direct contact with the sick person.

The Harris County Hospital District is the public health care system for the nation’s third most populous county. It provides more than 1.1 million health care visits each year to uninsured and underinsured residents of Harris County. The district operates Ben Taub General Hospital, Lyndon B. Johnson General Hospital, Quentin Mease Community Hospital, 12 community health centers, a dental center, eight school-based clinics, 13 homeless shelter clinics and four mobile health units.

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