FLU & PNEUMONIA
REDUCING HEALTH RISKS IN OLDER ADULTS WITH RESPIRATORY DISEASES
PATIENT EDUCATION GUIDE

STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY
This booklet may contain protected health information. Persons other than you and your health care providers must have your permission to view this booklet.
The Purpose of this Booklet

This booklet is designed to help you, your family, and caregivers understand the respiratory infections we call influenza (flu) and pneumonia. By following some basic health care tips contained within these pages the better your chances will be of preventing one or both of these infections. This booklet provides general information only and should not be substituted for professional medical advice. If you have any questions ask your doctor.

Benjamin Franklin was right when he said, “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure”. However, avoiding the flu and/or pneumonia is not always possible. In that case, this booklet will assist with early recognition of the symptoms. Recognizing your symptoms early may help to minimize the severity of your infection and encourage you to visit your doctor before the illness results in an unwanted emergency room visit or hospitalization.
Understanding How the Respiratory System Works

- The respiratory system is how the body exchanges the waste product carbon dioxide (in used air) for fresh air that contains oxygen.
- The respiratory system includes the nose, mouth, air passages and lungs.
- Human lungs are located inside the rib cage of the chest.
- The air passages, beyond the nose and mouth, bring air to and from the lungs. These passages are called:
  - the trachea (tra-key-a) or windpipe and
  - the bronchial tubes (bronk-e-al tubes). One goes to the right of the lungs and one to the left side of the lungs. See the picture above.
- The bronchial tubes look a lot like trees and are sometimes called bronchial trees because they have many small branches.
- At the ends of the branches, all throughout the lungs, there are little air sacs called alveoli (al-vee-oh-lie).
- It is at the alveoli level that the blood exchanges the air to get rid of the waste product carbon dioxide and replace it with life-supporting oxygen.
- Breathing starts at the nose or mouth by sucking in (inhaling) oxygen-filled fresh air and then blowing out (exhaling) the used air with the carbon dioxide.
- Humans breathe at approximately 16 to 20 times per minute. This can change as a person’s activity level changes or if there is a change in his/her health condition.
- A lack of oxygen can make a person feel very tired and weak. If this condition increases it can cause brain damage, which could eventually result in death.
This file is just a small sample of this booklet

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