Talking Points on Flu Prevention

• Flu season is here and it’s nothing to sneeze at.
• We have been hearing a lot about avian or bird flu, but so far, the H5N1 strain has not reached this country.
• H5N1 mainly affects birds and poultry, and is not easily spread from person to person.
• The concern is that in the future, the virus could mutate into one that passes easily from person to person.
• Seasonal flu, however, is very real, here and now. It comes every year and every year approximately 36,000 Americans die from complications.
• Fortunately, there are many things you can do to prevent seasonal flu — and to keep from giving it to others.
• The single best way to prevent flu is vaccination.
• Flu vaccines are available at (insert appropriate community information).
• It’s especially important for children over 6 months, pregnant women, the elderly and people with chronic illnesses to get vaccines.
• There are two types of vaccines — the “flu shot” and the nasal spray vaccine. No, neither one of them can give you the flu, though a small subset of people might get a slight fever after receiving the vaccine.
• In addition to a vaccine, there are a number of steps you can take to prevent flu — common courtesies that are simple but truly effective:
  ✓ Wash your hands with soap and warm water often, especially before and after you eat or after you use the bathroom.
  ✓ Cough or sneeze into your arm or sleeve, not your hands.
  ✓ Stay home from work if you think you have the flu and keep your kids out of the school if they might have it.
  ✓ Keep tissues and sanitizing gel or wipes handy — for your hands and for surfaces like telephones that are touched by numerous people.