

# Memo

TO: All

FROM: Carolyn Gray

DATE: Sept. 7, 2009

RE: Flu (we're agin' it)

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Last week, Anne had me go to a Swine Flu/Regular Flu workshop at our kids' school with a nurse from the Knox County Health Department and bring back information.

Per Anne, everyone should keep an easily accessible list of pending/ongoing work so that co-workers can step in if you get sick, including what HAS to get done the following day. That way, if you get sick, someone can step in and handle the gotta-do stuff for you. (For me, it's on my whiteboard.)

Here's a top-line of what I learned, and how we can use it:

**Why we care:** Swine flu is scary. It can kill you with "massive organ failure" and needs to be taken very seriously. Unlike regular, seasonal flu, swine flu can kill people who are young and otherwise healthy. Worldwide, as many as 30% of people could get swine flu this year.

**Swine flu v. regular flu:** The big indicator for swine flu is a high fever that doesn't respond well to Tylenol or ibuprofen. People over age 60 seem to have some immunity to the swine flu.

**Course of illness:**

- You're contagious for about a day before you show symptoms.
- You're sick as a dog for 2-3 days.
- You're contagious for up to 5 days after you start feeling bad.

**Prevention:** The Health Department recommends everyone get their seasonal (regular) flu shot ASAP, if not sooner. Swine flu is scary, but regular flu is also a bad, bad thing.

- Both types of flu are spread by touch, and the Health Department says washing hands is the best way to keep from getting either one.
- Everyone has a bottle of hand sanitizer in their office. There's also hand sanitizer in the kitchen and at the reception desk. Please use it. Often.
- Extra Clorox wipes are at the front reception desk, in the copy room, in the ladies' restroom and in the kitchen (with extras in the under-counter cabinets). Use them

to disinfect surfaces if someone is ill, if you feel ill, or if we've had clients coming through.

- Basically, pretend you're in the restroom at the bus station: Use hand sanitizer, disinfect surfaces, use your elbow to turn lights on and off, and generally make sure your hands and the surfaces they touch are clean. If you cough or sneeze, cover your mouth with a sleeve or a tissue, not your hand.
- Swine flu vaccine should be available in October. People in high-risk categories will get it first, and the CDC is recommending it for ages 6 months to 24 years.

**If someone gets sick:**

- If you're sick, the Health Department says to stay home. They also say that you'll feel so awful you won't get anything useful done, anyway.
- If you're sick and must come in, stay in your office and avoid touching surfaces used by others.
- If your child or other family member is ill, the Health Department recommends staying home with them. First, even an older child will need care and supervision (since this is scary flu). Also, you've already been exposed and will probably be contagious.

**When to worry:**

- Both sorts of flu can lead to damaging high fevers and even organ failure.
- If a child is ill, don't just let them sleep through the night. Wake them up to check their temp and re-dose with ibuprofen or Tylenol to try to get the fever down.
- Anyone who is pregnant or who has a chronic illness needs to see a doctor if they get either type of flu.
- If someone's fever consistently won't go down with ibuprofen or Tylenol, call your doctor for advice.
- If someone is getting worse, has difficulty breathing or can't keep fluids down, get to a doctor.
- According to the Health Department nurse: "You know your body. You know your child. If you think it's scary and you need a doctor, call the doctor."

# INFLUENZA



August 26, 2009

## SEASONAL FLU VACCINE FACTS

- Get your seasonal flu shot now. Contrary to popular myth, your immunity will last through the flu season.
- Public health officials recommend everyone who is eligible (anyone over the age of six months) get a seasonal flu vaccine.
- Five to 20 percent of the population gets the seasonal flu.
- No vaccine shortages expected this year. More than 115 million doses are currently being distributed. Private providers have vaccine now and are immunizing the general public.
- It is available as a shot or in nasal spray form.

### ***Symptoms are the same for seasonal flu and pandemic flu.***

- fever (usually high)
- headache
- extreme tiredness
- dry cough
- sore throat
- runny or stuffy nose
- muscle aches
- stomach symptoms can occur in children

Most healthy adults may be able to infect others beginning one day before symptoms develop and up to five days after becoming sick. That means you may be able to pass the flu on to someone else before you know you are sick.

### ***Recommendations for seeking medical care are the same for seasonal and pandemic flu:***

- Most people with mild symptoms do not need to seek medical care.
- Pregnant people, those with chronic illness, or those who are getting worse (difficulty breathing, fever that does not come down with medicine, or if you cannot keep liquids down) need to consult with their medical provider.

### ***Behaviors to avoid infection are the same for seasonal flu and pandemic flu:***

- If you are sick, stay home from work, school or child care.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze.
- If you don't have access to soap and water, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- To further prevent the spread of germs, avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
- Avoid close contact with sick people

## PANDEMIC FLU FACTS

- A pandemic is a global disease outbreak.
- Estimates on the infection level for H1N1 are purely speculative at this time, but since no one has immunity to this new strain, the infection rate could be 30 percent of the population.
- Vaccine information is fluid and subject to change
- The vaccine will be FDA licensed – it is the same vaccine as seasonal flu, just with a different virus strain. Most people will need two doses, at least three weeks apart.
- Vaccine will be shipped nationwide in October, with more than 65 million doses available by the end of October.
- Tennessee will receive 1.3 million doses shipped out in intervals. The first doses will go to health care workers and emergency responders.
- As supplies increase, vaccine will be available through medical offices, pharmacies, and public health.
- Knox County Health Department has a plan for conducting vaccination clinics to large groups of people, if the need arises. Clinics would be held in large public places around the county with easy access and free parking. Clinics will be well publicized.

### ***During first wave, the CDC has recommended these priority target groups for vaccination, based upon their burden of disease and risk of serious illness:***

- Everyone ages 6 months through 24 years
- All pregnant women and persons living with or caring for infants <6 months
- All health care workers and emergency services personnel
- Persons 25-64 with other medical risk factors

***Information is still emerging – Knox County Health Department will keep you updated or visit [www.flu.gov](http://www.flu.gov)***