



EPI OBSERVER

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A Quarterly Newsletter from the Martin County Health Department
Division of Epidemiology

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To Report A Disease

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Pandemic Flu Preparedness!

An influenza pandemic is a worldwide outbreak of the flu. This occurs when a new strain of the virus emerges that people have little or no immunity against and is easily spread from person to person. The H5N1 influenza strain primarily occurs among birds. However, if it were to mutate and allow for easy transmission among people, then this could result in a flu pandemic causing numerous cases of illness and death.

The World Health Organization (WHO) uses a pandemic alert system consisting of 6 phases in order to inform the world of a significant threat, as well as the need to respond and prepare. Currently, we are classified as being in phase 3, which indicates that "a new influenza virus subtype is causing disease in humans but is not spreading efficiently from person to person".

If a pan flu event occurred, then certain strategies would need to be adopted in order to control the spread of disease. These activities would include: travel restrictions, business and school closures, as well as suspension of large gatherings. It is likely that people would be encouraged to practice social distancing (i.e., staying at home even if they are not sick, avoid shaking hands, and wearing masks).

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Preparation Tips

- * Be aware of the various preparedness plans that your employer, daycare, school, church or business may have.
- * Have a plan in place for your family and pets in the event you are unable to leave your home for an extended period of time.
- * Have a Pan Flu survival kit:
 - ✓ A two week supply of water (one gallon per person)
 - ✓ Non-perishable foods
 - ✓ Fluids with electrolytes (i.e., sports drinks)
 - ✓ Infant formula and other needs
 - ✓ Specific items for those with special nutritional needs
 - ✓ Prescription medications, cough and cold medicines, pain relievers, fever reducing medications, vitamins, etc.
 - ✓ Disposable gloves, tissues, thermometers, masks, plastic/paper utensils, plates, cups, etc.
 - ✓ Other health and cleaning supplies (i.e., bleach soap, hand sanitizers, alcohol wipes, etc.)

For additional information visit: <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/avian/> & http://www.who.int/csr/disease/avian_influenza/en/index.html

What is Martin County Doing to Prepare?



- * Martin County Health Department (MCHD) Pan Flu plan has been developed.
- * Multiple table top Pan Flu exercises have been conducted, including the Influenza Control Exercise (ICE).
- * The Epidemiology and Environmental Health divisions of MCHD have been trained as part of the Region 5 Disaster Response Team, as well as the Region 5 Domestic Taskforce Security Task Force.
- * Epidemiology Pan Flu response has been exercised.
- * All MCHD staff have received basic ICS training.
- * The Medical Reserve Corp (MRC) and Behavioral Health Plans have been completed & staff were also trained on the incident command system (ICS).
- * The Strategic National Stockpile plan has been revised.
- * A MCHD emergency call down list has been implemented and exercised.

Prevention Strategies

- * If you are sick, stay at home from work, school and public areas.
- * Cover your nose and mouth when coughing and sneezing.
- * Dispose of used tissues as soon as you can.
- * Always wash your hands after sneezing, coughing or after touching used tissues.
- * Avoid sharing utensils, cups, bottles, telephones, etc.
- * Keep living and work areas clean and sanitized.
- * Disinfect common areas and shared objects.
- * Practice good hygiene and hand washing by using warm water and soap, or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer to clean your hands.
- * Be careful around persons who have flu-like symptoms (if possible, try to maintain a distance of 6 feet).

Healthcare workers should follow proper infection control measures in order to prevent the spread of influenza by:

- * Always using standard & transmission-based precautions.
- * Understanding how to correctly use and dispose of the appropriate personal protection equipment (PPE) (i.e., face masks/N95 respirators, gloves, gowns, etc.)



Common Pan Flu Terms & Definitions:

isolation: Separating an ill person from a group to prevent the spread of disease.

mutation: A change in a gene that could result in it causing disease. Mutations in influenza viruses are difficult to predict knowing if or when a virus such as the H5N1 might develop the properties needed to spread easily among humans.

seasonal flu: Also known as the common flu or winter flu. A respiratory illness that can be transmitted person to person. Many people have some immunity and a vaccine is available.

quarantine: An ordered period of confinement given to a person who appears well, but who might have been exposed to a disease. This is a method used to prevent the spread of disease.

endemic: The usual occurrence of a disease within a given area.

epidemic: The occurrence of a disease within a community, group or area that is greater in frequency than what is normally expected.

pandemic: a worldwide epidemic.

For additional information visit: <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/keyfacts.htm> & <http://www.pandemicflu.gov/>