

Pandemic Influenza

Preparing Dallas County



Dallas County Health and Human Services

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Dallas County Health and Human Services (DCHHS) has the capacity to rapidly identify individuals who have the pandemic flu strain. DCHHS also has the capacity to conduct intensive hospital surveillance, identify and document the number of cases occurring daily, and forecast the projected number of cases.

DCHHS is actively involved in efforts to prepare and educate the public, municipalities, hospitals, first responders, schools, faith and community based organizations, and many other non-governmental agencies as well as service providers regarding the potential impact of an influenza pandemic.

As part of our ongoing efforts to prepare for public health emergencies, DCHHS hosted a pandemic influenza symposium and table-top exercise; launched public education campaigns; and is conducting a series of presentations to numerous organizations including: area hospitals, healthcare providers, business community leaders, faith-based and community-based organizations and government officials.



Be Ready...

Pandemics are "low probability, high impact" events. They are random, with a few occurring every century. It is difficult to predict when the next influenza pandemic will occur or how severe it will be. Wherever and whenever a pandemic starts, everyone around the world is at risk.

Be Prepared



In the event of a pandemic influenza; everyone in the community is a stakeholder.

How Will a Pandemic Effect Me?

Once the virus enters Dallas County, you will probably have a 33% - 50% chance of getting sick. You will need to be prepared to care for ill family members. There will be shortages of essential supplies and services. During a pandemic, you may be asked to shelter-at-home for up to 10-days. Public gatherings such as churches, movies, theaters and sporting events would be cancelled. Most businesses would be asked to either close or implement social distancing practices. You would be asked to limit all close personal contact when in public, to wash your hands frequently, and to wear masks under certain circumstances.

What Can I Do Now?

First, Dallas County Health and Human Services (DCHHS) encourages everyone to follow good health habits to help prevent the spread of seasonal influenza and other diseases and to teach these habits to children:

- Get your annual flu shot,
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick,
- Stay home or avoid close contact with others when you are sick,
- Cover your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing,
- Wash your hands with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer often, especially after using the restroom and before eating,
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.

Second, DCHHS urges everyone to take personal responsibility by developing a preparedness plan for their home and workplace. In some emergencies, such as pandemic influenza, the public may be asked to shelter-at-home. There are eight basic things each household needs to stock: water, food, first aid supplies, clothing, bedding, tools, emergency supplies, and special items. DCHHS recommends that you have a two week supply of each item for every person in your home. Suggested guidelines for the items in the event of an emergency are available on the DCHHS website at www.dallascounty.org.

Flu, Bird Flu, Pandemic Flu... What's the difference?

Seasonal Flu

The Flu is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses. It can cause mild to severe illness, and at times can lead to death. The best way to prevent this illness is by getting a flu vaccination each fall.

Avian (or Bird) Flu

Bird Flu (avian influenza) is a contagious disease of birds but may occasionally cause disease in other animals, as well as humans. The current outbreak of the H5N1 bird flu virus is the most severe outbreak in poultry ever recorded and is unusual in the severity of illness caused in humans.

Pandemic Influenza

Flu pandemics occur when there is a major change in the genetic make-up of the virus. All humans are susceptible, attack rates are high, and mortality rates may be high as well. Influenza pandemics spread rapidly and can travel around the world in only a few months.

www.dallascounty.org

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