



#85 PREVENTING THE SPREAD OF COMMUNICABLE DISEASES



Each year, an average of more than 200,000 people are hospitalized and 36,000 people die from seasonal influenza (flu) complications in the United States. You can help keep yourself, your family, and your fellow 4-H volunteers and members healthy and prevent the spread of seasonal colds, flu, and other communicable diseases by practicing some simple measures at home, work, school, and other social settings. In fall of 2009, there is particular concern over the novel H1N1 influenza virus (also known as swine flu). The precautions to protect yourself from H1N1 are the same as those recommended for seasonal flu or other common communicable illnesses.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) urges you to take the following actions to protect yourself and others from the flu:

Take time to get vaccinated for seasonal influenza

- CDC recommends a yearly seasonal flu vaccine as the first and most important step in protecting against seasonal influenza. While there are many different flu viruses, the seasonal flu vaccine protects against the three seasonal viruses that research suggests will be most common.
- Vaccination is especially important for people at high risk of serious flu complications, including young children, pregnant women, people with chronic health conditions like asthma, diabetes or heart and lung disease, and people 65 years and older. Seasonal flu vaccine is also important for health care workers, and other people who live with or care for high risk people to prevent giving the flu to those at high risk.
- A seasonal vaccine will not protect you against novel H1N1. A new vaccine against novel H1N1 is being produced and will be available in the coming months as an option for prevention of novel H1N1 infection to those at greatest risk. People at greatest risk for novel H1N1 infection include children, pregnant women, and people with chronic health conditions like asthma, diabetes, or heart and lung disease.

Take everyday preventive actions

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it. If a tissue is not available, cough or sneeze into your sleeve. An informative and amusing video on covering your sneeze can be viewed at: <http://www.coughsafe.com/>
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- If you are sick with flu-like illness, CDC recommends that you stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone except to get medical care or for other necessities. (Your fever should be gone without the use of a fever-reducing medicine.) Keep away from others as much as possible. This is to keep from making others sick.
- Visit the CDC website (<http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/>) to find out what to do if you get sick with the flu and how to care for someone at home who is sick with the flu.



Stay Informed

In addition to the precautions above, it is important that you stay informed, especially during the upcoming flu season. Health officials will provide additional information as it becomes available. UC ANR EH&S has established a website at (http://safety.ucanr.edu/Programs/Public_Health/) to provide links to information from CDC, the California Department of Public Health, and County Public Health Departments to help bring you national, state, and local guidance as the flu season progresses. Follow public health advice regarding school closures, avoiding crowds, and other social distancing measures. When planning for camp, consult CDC guidance (<http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/camp>) and local public health officials and develop a plan to respond to an illness outbreak at camp.