Caring for Yourself and Others

Seasonal and Pandemic Influenza

A Preparedness Guide for the Fairfax – Falls Church Community

Keep this Guide for Future Reference

COUNTY OF FAIRFAX
1742
VIRGINIA

Fairfax County Pandemic Flu Preparedness

May 2011

Revised August 2009

A Message from the Health Director

Dear Resident,

Fairfax County Government developed an Influenza Response Plan in July 2007 in case of a worldwide influenza outbreak – a flu pandemic. This plan details what the county will do to contain an outbreak within our community and preserve health care and critical community services to the extent possible.

On June 11, 2009, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared a pandemic in response to the widespread respiratory illnesses caused by a novel swine-flu origin Influenza A H1N1 virus. Influenza pandemics tend to occur in two to three waves of disease outbreaks in communities over a period of 12 - 18 months. The full impact of a flu pandemic on our community cannot be predicted. However, being prepared may help reduce the impact. Fairfax County Government has engaged all county agencies and surrounding cities and towns, the private sector, local hospitals, the medical community and faith-based organizations in its preparedness efforts.

Planning for pandemic flu is not just a government issue. Residents have a responsibility to prepare themselves and their family. This reference guide will help you understand influenza; learn how to protect yourself and others from catching the flu and how to limit its spread; find out how to manage illness in yourself and others; determine when to seek medical care; and know what to do to prepare yourself and family for a pandemic or other emergencies that might disrupt our community for an extended time.

Hand washing is the most important – and easiest – action we can take to prevent the spread of many illnesses, including influenza. Page 14 of this guide stresses hand washing and provides instructions on how and when to wash hands. My hope is that everyone learns to wash their hands properly and frequently.

Please read this guide carefully and keep it for future reference in case anyone in your household becomes ill with influenza.

Gloria Addo-Ayensu, M.D., M.P.H.
Director of Health
Fairfax County Health Department

Inside this Guide

Influenza – the Flu — Page 2

- About Influenza
- How Influenza Spreads
- Common Symptoms of the Flu
- Complications Associated with Influenza

Protecting Yourself and Others Against Influenza — Page 4

Managing Influenza — Page 7

- Self Care at Home
- When to Seek Medical Care

Planning for Pandemic Flu — Page 10

- What to Expect
- Fairfax County Response Plan
- Individual and Family Preparedness

Hand Washing Guide — Page 14

Emergency Information — Page 16

Influenza – the Flu

About Influenza

Influenza, also known as the flu, is a highly contagious infection of the breathing system (nose, throat and lungs) caused by influenza viruses.

Seasonal influenza is caused by viruses that already circulate among people. Most people have some immunity and a vaccine is available to help prevent the flu. In the United States, flu season usually starts in late fall and lasts throughout the winter, sometimes into early spring.

Avian influenza, also called bird flu, is caused by viruses that occur naturally among wild birds. Sometimes these viruses (such as one called H5N1) can be transmitted from birds to humans. There is no human immunity and no vaccine is available.

Pandemic influenza refers to an outbreak caused by a new flu virus (such as the 2009 H1N1 influenza virus) that spreads around the world. The disease can spread easily from person to person because people have little natural immunity when a new virus is identified. There is no vaccine ready to protect against pandemic influenza because the new virus strain must be identified before a vaccine can be produced, which can take up to six months.

How Influenza Spreads

The main way influenza viruses spread is from person to person when an infected person coughs, sneezes or talks. When someone with the flu coughs or sneezes, droplets containing the virus are sprayed into the air. Someone else can become infected if they breathe the infected droplets, or touch infected droplets on surfaces and then touch their own eyes, nose or mouth.

Common Symptoms of the Flu

Symptoms of the flu include fever, dry cough, sore throat, runny nose, headache, muscle aches, extreme weakness and tiredness. In addition, children may have nausea, vomiting and diarrhea.

People develop symptoms one to four days after being infected. They may be contagious (that is, they can spread the virus to others) starting from the day before the first symptom develops until five days after symptoms develop. Children who are infected can spread the virus for more than a week. This is also true of adults who have weakened immune systems.

In general, the seasonal flu is worse than the common cold and symptoms are more intense. People with colds are more likely to have a runny or stuffy nose and typically do not develop serious health problems. Pandemic influenza is much more serious than seasonal influenza and is likely to cause many more deaths.

Complications Associated with Influenza

In some people, influenza can cause serious complications such as bacterial pneumonia, dehydration and heart failure. The people most at risk of complications for seasonal influenza are:

- Children younger than 2 years
- Adults 65 and older
- People with weakened immune systems and chronic illnesses such as asthma, congestive heart failure and diabetes
- High risk groups may vary as more is learned about new influenza viruses and which populations are most affected

Each year, more than 200,000 people in the United States are hospitalized from complications of the flu, and about 36,000 die as a result.

Protecting Yourself and Others Against Influenza

- **Get an annual flu vaccine**. Influenza viruses change continuously, so a new vaccine is created each year. The vaccine helps protect against the most likely strains of influenza circulating in the community. The vaccine is recommended for anyone who wants to reduce their risk of influenza, especially those at high risk for flu-related complications and severe disease.

Cough or sneeze into a tissue or sleeve. Do not cough or sneeze into your hands.

Currently, there are two types of vaccine – a flu shot and a nasal spray. The flu shot is approved for anyone older than 6 months. People age 2 to 49 can get the nasal-spray flu vaccine if they are not pregnant or do not have a weakened immune system. Annual flu vaccine is effective only against seasonal flu and may not protect against a pandemic virus.

- **Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or your upper sleeve.** Discard used tissues and wash your hands afterwards. Do not cough or sneeze into your hands.

- **Wash your hands.** Always wash hands after coughing, sneezing, using tissues, using the toilet, and touching public surfaces (such as door handles, shopping carts, etc). Be sure to wash your hands after any contact with a person who has the flu or with their immediate surroundings – their home or their room.

Always wash your hands before touching eyes, nose, mouth, inserting contact lenses and preparing food. See the Hand Washing Guide on page 14.

When soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

The guidance on the use of face- masks may be revised as more information is known.

- **Avoid close contact with people who are sick.** When possible, stay at least 6 feet away from someone who is coughing and sneezing.

  If close contact cannot be avoided (for example, you are caring for a sick person at home), consider wearing a respirator (a facepiece designed to protect you from breathing in very small particles, which might contain viruses). Respirators fit tightly to the face so that most air is inhaled through the filtered material. Respirator devices with the numbers N95 or above have been shown to be most effective.

- **Stay home when you are sick.** This will help prevent others from catching your illness. Consider wearing a facemask if you are sick with the flu and need to have close contact with other people.

- **Avoid crowds.** During a pandemic, avoid crowded places when possible to limit the spread of the flu. If you must go into a crowded place consider wearing a facemask while you are there, especially if you live with someone who has the flu, because you might be in the early stages of infection. If you are well and cannot avoid the crowded location, you can also wear a facemask while there.

Managing Influenza

Self Care at Home

- **Fever, headaches, muscle pain.** Use acetaminophen or ibuprofen. Follow the directions on the package, or as your doctor recommends. Aspirin should not be given to children younger than 18 years unless specifically prescribed by a doctor because of possible serious complications. For fever in a child younger than 2 years, consult your doctor.

- **Vomiting and diarrhea.** Drink plenty of fluids including water, juices and fluids with electrolytes, such as sports drinks and pediatric rehydration fluids. Avoid caffeinated drinks, such as coffee, tea and cola, because they cause the body to lose more fluids.

- **Cough.** Use a cough suppressant if coughing interferes with sleeping and eating. Check the product label or talk to your doctor or pharmacist about which products to use, their side-effects and dosage. Use all medications only as directed.

- **Congestion.** Use a decongestant. Nasal sprays may give relief, but do not use them for more than two to three days. Check the product label or talk to your doctor or pharmacist about which products to use, their side-effects and dosage. Use all medications only as directed.

- **Sore throat.** Drink more fluids, suck on throat lozenges, gargle with warm salt water and spit out the water after gargling. Add moisture to the air with a humidifier. Decrease the use of your voice.

- **Antivirals.** Your doctor may prescribe antiviral medication. To be effective, antiviral treatment must be started within two days after onset of illness. Check with your doctor if you are at high risk for serious complications from influenza. During a flu pandemic, we do not know how effective current antivirals will be against a pandemic flu virus, or their availability.

- **General care.** Get lots of rest, drink plenty of fluids and avoid using alcohol and tobacco.

When to Seek Medical Care for Children and Teenagers

See a doctor any time you feel uncomfortable about how your child is looking or acting.

See a doctor if your child has:	Go to the emergency room if your child is:
• Fever of 100.4º F (38º C) or higher	• Age three months or younger with temperature of 100.4ºF (38º C) or higher
• Hoarse cry, or a barking cough or is pulling on his/her ears	• Breathing with difficulty (wheezing, noisy, too fast/too slow, pulling muscles between ribs when breathing)
• Decreased eating and drinking	• Not eating or drinking
• History of heart or lung disease that requires medical care	• Showing symptoms such as pale or blue lips, hands or feet, cold legs
• History of disease or treatment that weakens the immune system	• Having continuous vomiting and/or diarrhea
• Prolonged crying and cannot be calmed	• Not urinating – for babies, no wet diaper in 8 hours
• Decreased activity, no interest in playing	• Sleeping more than normal, difficult to arouse, confused, unresponsive
• Combination of fever with sore throat, headache, stomach ache, earache	• Having seizures
• A medical condition that requires taking aspirin regularly	• Showing signs of pain including headache, stiff neck, sensitivity to light

When to Seek Medical Care for Adults

See a doctor any time there is concern about how the adult is looking or acting.

See a doctor if an adult has:	Go to the emergency room if an adult is:
• Fever of 100.4º F (38º C) or higher for 48 hours	• Breathing with difficulty or pain
• Combination of fever with sore throat, headache, severe earache, stomach ache, muscle aches that do not improve	• Feeling short of breath while resting
• Hoarse, barking cough	• Coughing bloody sputum or phlegm
• History of heart or lung disease or any chronic disease that requires regular medical care	• Feeling chest pain
• History of disease or treatment that weakens the immune system	• Having continuous vomiting and/or diarrhea
	• Drowsy, difficult to arouse or is unresponsive
	• Showing signs of disorientation or confusion

Planning for Pandemic Flu

What to Expect

- Influenza pandemics happen every few decades. They occur in multiple waves of disease outbreaks over a period of a year or longer. Each wave can last six to 12 weeks. Every flu pandemic is different and it is impossible to predict its full impact until the virus starts circulating. However, we do know that it is likely to cause significant illness in a large number of people, as well as many deaths.

- A flu pandemic will disrupt the daily lives of many people. Health care and other services will be strained; and businesses and schools might have to close. There may be restrictions on public gatherings and travel. Essential government services (including water, power and sanitation) could be disrupted.

- To limit the spread of disease in the community, public health officials may implement ***isolation*** (separating those who are sick from those who are healthy) and ***quarantine*** (separating and restricting movement of persons who are not yet ill but have been exposed and therefore may become infectious). Isolation and quarantine may be voluntary or mandatory through legal authority.

Fairfax County Response Plan

To lessen the potential impact of a flu pandemic on our community, Fairfax County Government has worked with community partners to develop a comprehensive plan to respond quickly. Community partners include schools, the medical community, businesses, nonprofits and faith-based organizations.

The Fairfax County Pandemic Influenza Response Plan provides a guide for county government on how to prepare and respond during and after a flu pandemic. The goals of the plan are to:

- Contain and control disease outbreak
- Limit the number of illnesses and deaths
- Continue and preserve critical government functions
- Minimize social disruptions
- Minimize economic losses

The plan is available on the Fairfax County Web site at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/flu/guide/pandemic-flu-planning.htm.

Individual and Family Preparedness

Make a Family Plan

- Talk with family members and loved ones about how they would be cared for if they got sick, or what will be needed to care for them at home.
- Have a backup caregiver for loved ones.
- Plan ahead for childcare if schools and childcare programs close.
- Ask your employer about sick leave and telecommuting policies.

- Keep emergency numbers and this guide in a place where everyone in the household can access them.
- Plan for possible disruption in health care services, transportation, banks, stores, utilities and government offices.
- Agree on plans with other family members, friends and neighbors ahead of time.

Prepare Your Home

- Store a two-week supply of water and food in your home. Store ready-to-eat canned meats, fruits, vegetables, beans and soups; protein or fruit bars; dry cereal or granola; peanut butter; nuts; dried fruit; crackers; canned or boxed juices; bottled water; canned or jarred baby food and formula; pet food.

Note expiration dates on your emergency supplies and replace as needed.

- Ask your doctor and insurance company about getting an extra supply of prescription medications.
- Depending on your medical needs, store health and medical supplies such as a digital thermometer, glucose and blood pressure monitoring equipment, pain and fever relievers, stomach remedies, cough and cold medicines, and fluids with electrolytes, such as sports drinks and pediatric rehydration fluids.
- Other health and emergency supplies to have on hand include soap and alcohol-based hand sanitizer, flashlights, batteries, portable radio, manual can opener, garbage bags, tissues, paper towels, toilet paper and disposable diapers.

Stay Informed

- Sign up for Fairfax County's Community Emergency Alert Network (CEAN) to receive up-to-the minute notifications about emergencies in the area at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/cean.

  Messages will be delivered to all devices that you register, including e-mail, cell phone, text pager, satellite phone and wireless PDA. For more information, call Fairfax County Office of Emergency Management at 571-350-1000, TTY 711.

- For more information about pandemic preparedness, visit:
  - Fairfax County's Flu Web page www.fairfaxcounty.gov/flu
  - Fairfax County Health Department www.fairfaxcounty.gov/hd
  - U.S. Department of Health and Human Services - www.flu.gov
  - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention www.cdc.gov

- Call the Fairfax County Government Emergency Information Line for updated recorded messages at 703-817-7771, TTY 711.

- Additional information is available on Fairfax County Cable Channel 16.

Hand Washing Guide

How to Wash Hands

- Start with warm or hot water.
- Use soap and make a lather.
- Rub and scrub thoroughly for 20 seconds.
- Scrub palms, back of hands, between fingers and under nails.
- Rinse well, and then use a paper towel to shut off the faucet.
- Dry hands completely.

When to Wash Hands

Always wash hands after:
■ Using the toilet
■ Changing diapers
■ Coughing, sneezing or using a tissue
■ Eating, drinking or smoking
■ Touching cuts, burns or infected areas of the skin
■ Handling raw meat and poultry
■ Touching animals
■ Touching public surfaces such as door handles
Always wash hands before:
■ Touching eyes, nose or mouth
■ Inserting or removing contact lenses
■ Preparing food
■ Eating

Hand washing instruction signs (in English and Spanish) are available free-of-charge from the Health Department. Call 703-246-2411, TTY 711, or visit the Health Department hand washing Web page at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/hd/handwashing.
Post these signs in bathrooms and above sinks in public areas.

Emergency Information

Write down emergency contact information and make sure all household members know where to find it.

Contacts	Name/Phone Number(s)
Personal emergency contacts Local contact	
Personal emergency contacts Out-of-town contact	
Family physician(s)	
Pharmacy	
Children's day care provider and/or schools	
Babysitter	
Veterinarian	
Pet sitter	
Employer	
Neighbor(s)	
Insurance provider and policy number	
Other important phone numbers	
Fairfax County Health Department	**703-246-2411, TTY 711**
Emergency–Police, Fire, Ambulance	**9-1-1, TTY 9-1-1**
Non-emergency	**703-691-2131, TTY 711**

Important Health Information About You and Your Family Members

Complete this chart and make sure all household members know where to find it.

Family Member	Blood Type	Allergies (drugs, foods, environmental agents)	Past/Current Medical Conditions	Current Medications/ Dosages

Fairfax County Health Department
10777 Main Street
Fairfax, VA 22030
703-246-2411
TTY 711
www.fairfaxcounty.gov/hd

A Fairfax County, Va., publication

Fairfax County is committed to nondiscrimination and equal access to all county programs, services and activities. The information in this document can be made available in an alternative format upon request. To request an alternative format, call the Health Department at 703-246-2411, TTY 711.

May 2011