

For immediate release
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Mason County Health Department
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Preparing for Pandemic Flu – A Family Checklist

As news broadcasts and television programs continue to paint an alarming picture of a potential future pandemic related to swine flu, the Mason County Health Department is expecting an increasing number of phone calls from a concerned public. The H1N1 swine influenza virus has not yet infected people or animals in central Illinois, however it is possible that people in Mason County may eventually be affected. Mason County Health Department and Mason District Hospital are working together to complete a thorough surveillance so they will know when the disease enters the area. Health officials have been watching the disease very closely throughout the world. The outbreak is ongoing and continuing cases are expected.

People in the area who are experiencing symptoms consistent with swine flu and have traveled to an affected area (see <http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/investigation.htm> for affected areas) or who have been exposed to someone possibly infected with swine flu during the last 7 days, should report their illness to their health care provider immediately and inform them of their recent travel. Swine flu symptoms include fever greater than 100F, sore throat, cough, chills, head and body aches, fatigue. In addition, those infected may also occasionally experience diarrhea and vomiting.

With that background in mind, the Mason County Health Department would like to pass on information to help lessen the impact of an influenza pandemic on you and your family. The following checklist, developed by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, will help you gather the information and resources you need in case of a flu pandemic.

1. To plan for a pandemic:

Store a two-week supply of water and food. During a pandemic (or other emergencies), if you cannot get to a store, or stores are out of supplies, it will be important for you to have extra supplies on hand.

Have nonprescription drugs and health supplies on hand, including pain relievers, stomach remedies, cold medicines, vitamins, etc

Don't forget your prescription medicines and monitoring equipment.

Talk with loved ones about how they would be cared for if they got sick, or what would be needed to care for them in your home.

Get involved in your community as it works to prepare for the pandemic.

2. To limit the spread of germs and prevent infection:

Wash your hands frequently with soap and water.

Children and adults should cover coughs and sneezes with tissues.

Teach your kids to stay away from others as much as possible if they are sick.

Stay home from work or school if you are sick.

For a more complete checklist detailing the items to have on hand for an extended stay at home stop by the Mason County Health Department in Havana or watch next week's paper. For more information on Swine flu please see the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) website: <http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/>.