

The Pandemic Flu – Are you ready?

Recently, there have been public meetings at the Board of Education and Russell Medical Center in Alexander City concerning the Pandemic Flu. It is time for people to become concerned about the severity of this flu. However, we don't want people to panic – just take some precautions and be prepared.

The H5N1 Avian flu is caused by a virus that affects birds. According to Dawn Harris, Alabama Department of Public Health, a low-grade form has been found in birds located in Maryland. However, the virus has not mutated yet from human to human so don't be alarmed. Currently, there is no Pandemic Flu in the United States as of yet but this will be an evolving situation and we must wait and see.

The flu that we are now seeing is the seasonal flu that has arrived very early this year. According to Joe Paul Boone, Emergency Management Director-Tallapoosa County, this seasonal flu is already in some northern and southern schools in our state. Here are some precautions that you can take:

- **Get The Flu Shot.** Debbie Thompson, Tallapoosa County Health Department Nursing Supervisor, stated that the flu shot will not protect us from the H5N1 virus; however, it may make this particular strain less severe if we get it. It will offer some protection as well as prevent the seasonal flu.
- **Wash, Wash, Wash Your Hands.** This is the best defense against illnesses. You must leave the soap on your hands until you count to 20 while rubbing and scrubbing. Germs can get down into the little cracks and lines in our hands. Make some soap suds in the palm of one hand by making circular motions with the finger tips of the other hand. Then turn your fingernails up and make circular motions getting under your nails – reverse hands. Rinse and dry hands well. When in a public place, take down the paper towel first, wash, rinse, do not turn off the faucet. Take paper towel, dry hands; turn off faucet with paper towel. Remember, most people do not wash their hands after using the restroom and you may go out with more germs than you had coming in if you do not open the door with the paper towel.
- **Use Cough Etiquette.** If you must cough or sneeze, a tissue or a paper towel would be best. If you don't have one, cough or sneeze into your sleeve. Coughing into the hands spreads a lot of germs.
- **Practice Social Distancing.** Stay at home when possible, avoid shaking hands, etc.
- **Stockpile Food Items.** When you go to the grocery store, buy extra so you will not have to go to public places frequently.
- **Avoid Touching Nose and Eyes.** Touching your nose and eyes will allow germs to enter your body.
- **Antibacterial Hand Wipes.** Take advantage of those antibacterial hand wipes that the grocery stores are now providing to wipe off the handles of the cart. Use antibacterial wipes and soaps out in public and in your office or car; however do not use them at home. Germs will mutate to antibacterial products if they are used too often and with over use will be able to live in antibacterial products. Use regular soaps at home.
- **Eat Healthy Foods.** Fruits and vegetables provide vitamin C and antioxidants that keep our immune system healthy. Other food groups on our new pyramid provide us with a variety of nutrients for our immune system.
- **Get Some Exercise.** Exercise gives you twice as many germ fighters in your body and the larger our army, the more protected we are.

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