

Dear Parents,

Almost daily, we hear about the outbreak of avian flu and its spreading to more countries around the world. It is important to know that, at this time, avian flu is not occurring in the United States. However, it may arrive here in the near future. Although avian flu has infected millions of birds, it usually does not infect people.

Scientists and public health professionals are concerned that the avian flu virus may change so that it can infect people and spread easily from person-to-person. This would cause a worldwide flu outbreak, called a pandemic. The purpose of this letter is to provide you with information to help your family to prepare for a flu pandemic.

If pandemic flu spreads to King County, officials may need to close schools for an extended period of time (for example, up to 6 weeks). Begin planning now for childcare in your home. The purpose of closing schools will be to decrease contact among children in order to decrease their risk of getting sick and to limit the spread of infection. If schools are closed, children should stay at home. During this time, they should stay away from other people and groups, as much as possible. They should not gather in other locations such as homes, shopping malls, movie theaters or community centers.

Prevent

To limit the spread of germs and prevent colds and flu now and during a flu pandemic:

- Teach your children to wash hands frequently with soap and water for 20 seconds. Be sure to set a good example by doing this yourself.
- Teach your children to cover coughs and sneezes with tissues or by coughing into the inside of the elbow. Be sure to set a good example by doing this yourself.
- Teach your children to stay away from people who are sick. People who are sick should stay home from work or school and avoid other people until they are better.

Plan for an extended stay at home during a flu pandemic.

- Ask your employer about how business will continue during a pandemic.
- Ask your employer if you can work from home during a flu pandemic.
- Plan for a possible reduction or loss of income, if you are unable to work or your place of employment is closed.
- Check with your employer or union about leave policies.
- Plan home learning activities and exercises. Have materials, such as books, on hand.
- Plan recreational activities that your children can do at home.

Items to have on hand for an extended stay at home:

Examples: Non-perishable foods

- ~Ready to eat canned meats, fruits, vegetables, soups
- ~Protein or fruit bars
- ~Dry cereal or granola
- ~Peanut butter and jelly
- ~Dried fruit, nuts, trail mix
- ~Crackers
- ~Canned juices
- ~Bottled water
- ~Canned or jarred baby food
- ~Baby formula
- ~Pet food

Health and emergency supplies

- ~Prescribed medical supplies such as glucose and blood pressure monitoring
- ~Soap and water or alcohol based hand wash
- ~Medicines for fever, such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen
- ~Thermometer
- ~Vitamins
- ~Fluids with electrolytes, such as Pedialyte®
- ~Flashlight with extra batteries
- ~Portable radio with extra batteries
- ~Manual can opener
- ~Garbage bags
- ~Tissues, toilet paper, disposable diapers

If someone in your family develops flu symptoms (fever, cough, muscle aches):

- ✓ Encourage plenty of fluids to drink.
- ✓ Keep the ill person as comfortable as possible. Rest is important.
- ✓ For fever, sore throat and muscle aches, use ibuprofen or acetaminophen.
- ✓ Do not use aspirin in children or teenagers; it can cause Reye's syndrome, a life-threatening illness.
- ✓ Sponging with tepid (wrist-temperature) water lowers fever only during the period of sponging. Do not sponge with alcohol.
- ✓ Keep tissues and a trash bag for their disposal within reach of the patient.
- ✓ All members of the household should wash their hands frequently.
- ✓ Keep other family members and visitors away from the person who is ill.
- ✓ Contact a healthcare provider for further advice. If the ill person is having difficulty breathing or is getting worse, contact the healthcare provider right away.

If you have further questions, please contact your School Nurse or healthcare provider.

Recommendations may change during the course of an influenza pandemic. Up-to-date guidance will be available from your healthcare provider and at these websites:

Public Health – Seattle & King County: www.kingcounty.gov/health/pandemicflu

Official U.S. Government website with information on planning for individuals and families: www.flu.gov