



# JCDHE Emergency Preparedness Program

## Understanding and Practicing Influenza Prevention and Control Measures Assists in Preparing Community for Pandemic

Informing, educating, and empowering the public of health issues is one of the ten essential services for public health. All of JCDHE's programs work together to accomplish this service for the residents of Jefferson County. The JCDHE Emergency Preparedness Program (EP) works to inform the public of what to do during a public health emergency. Every day public health prevention messages regarding how to protect against particular diseases, how to stop the spread of disease and the importance of healthy hygiene are also key to being better prepared for a public health emergency.

Influenza is an example of the important connection between daily public health practice and better preparing our communities for public health emergencies. Understanding and following basic Influenza prevention and control measures will also be protective during a potential pandemic in the future.

During the first months of a pandemic (outbreak of disease exceeding what is normal and covering very large geographic areas), a vaccine will most likely not be available. The methods of protection for pandemic influenza will initially be the same methods of protection used every year for seasonal influenza.

### Seasonal Influenza "Flu" Definition:

"Flu is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses."  
*Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)*

### Common Questions About Influenza:

#### What is the difference between seasonal, avian, and pandemic influenzas?



◆ **Seasonal influenza** occurs every year. The CDC estimates that 5% to 20% of the public gets sick from flu each year, with approximately 200,000 needing hospitalization.

Symptoms can include fever, headache, tiredness, dry cough, sore throat, and muscle aches. Older people, young children, and people with certain health conditions are at high risk for serious flu complications. Each year the average death toll attributed to influenza is roughly 36,000 people.

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Influenza viruses are spread from person to person primarily by respiratory droplets of coughs and sneezes. (This is called "droplet spread.") Droplets from a cough or sneeze of an infected person are sent through the air, (usually up to 3 feet) and deposited on the mouth or nose of people nearby. People may also become infected by touching something with influenza virus on it and then touching their mouth, nose, or eyes.



◆ **Avian, or bird flu,** occurs naturally among birds and usually does not infect humans. Wild birds may carry the viruses in their intestines but usually do not get sick. Avian influenza is very contagious among birds, however, and can make some domesticated birds including chickens, ducks, and turkeys very sick and die. People can get avian influenza but it is rare and generally follows direct and prolonged exposure to infected birds.



◆ **Pandemic influenza** is a global disease outbreak of a new type A influenza virus for which humans have little or no immunity. It can

easily be spread from person to person. There is currently no pandemic flu strain in circulation.

### How do I tell between an epidemic and a pandemic?

An *epidemic* is an outbreak of disease that exceeds what is normal or expected. As stated before, seasonal flu counts range from 5% to 20% of the U.S. population every year. If that percentage was 30%, an epidemic would be occurring. A *pandemic* is an outbreak of disease exceeding what is normal and covering very large geographic areas, most likely crossing borders and continents. Basically, a pandemic is an epidemic that spreads across countries and possibly the entire world.

### How to Prevent Getting Influenza

With many flu viruses, individuals may be infectious and capable of spreading the virus to others before their own symptoms have begun. It is important to recognize that those you come into contact with may already be capable of spreading illness. For this reason, it is necessary to pay close attention to vigorous handwashing and avoiding close contact. This is especially important during cold and flu season.

Influenza viruses generally infect the nose, throat and lungs. As a person becomes sick with flu, symptoms such as coughing and sneezing occur. People may also become infected by touching something with influenza virus on it and then touching their mouth, nose, or eyes. Germs and viruses do not jump. They must be transported through the chain of infection: source – transmission – host. An infected person, or a source, must start the process. Since the flu virus is spread from infected people by the droplets produced with a cough or sneeze, they create the mode of transmission. For example, their infected hand may be used for shaking someone else's or serving food or sharing some other object. A host, or another person, must be available for the virus to enter.

# Influenza . . . Break the Chain of Infection!

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This can happen when the host wipes their eyes or eats the contaminated food or otherwise gets the virus into their mouth, eyes or nose. This starts the whole chain of infection again.

Breaking the chain of infection is very important in stopping the spread of disease in our daily lives as well as in any public health emergency involving a contagious disease.

## What can I do to break the chain of infection and avoid getting the flu?



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**Get a flu shot.** A seasonal flu shot can help keep the flu away. A flu shot is especially important for all health workers, people 50 years and older, children under 2 years, and individuals with compromised immune systems. JCDHE advises the public to call their health care provider for their annual flu shot. JCDHE also offers flu shots vaccine during its regular immunization clinics for children 6 months and older and adults through age 64. Please call 303-232-6301 to make an appointment. For information on flu clinics throughout Colorado please call the recorded Influenza/Flu Hotline at 303-692-2633 or visit: [www.immunizecolorado.com](http://www.immunizecolorado.com)

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**Clean your hands.** Washing your hands often will help protect you from germs. Because other people may cover their coughs or sneezes with their hands and then touch surfaces like door knobs, tables or desks, it is best to wash your hands as often. The use of an alcohol-based hand wipes or gel sanitizer can also help to kill the germs if soap and water are unavailable.

**Cover your mouth and nose.** Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing, and throw the tissue in a wastebasket. This may prevent those around you from getting sick. If you don't have a tissue, sneeze or cough into your forearm or bent elbow, or pull your shirt collar up over your nose and mouth. All of these actions will keep you from contaminating your hands.

**Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.** Germs are often spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose, or mouth.

**Avoid close contact.** Again, as many flu viruses can be spread before an individual even knows he or she is ill, it is a good idea to avoid close contact. A good rule is to keep three feet between you and any other person, especially if you are sick.

**Stay home when you are sick.** If possible, stay home from work, school, and errands when you are sick. You will help prevent others from catching your illness.

**Practice other good health habits.** Proper eating, plenty of sleep, managing stress, exercising or staying physically active and drinking plenty of fluids will help you to stay healthy all year long and especially during the flu season. If you do become sick or have flu symptoms, check with your primary care provider, stay home and get plenty of rest and liquids.

## How can I get more information about seasonal, pandemic, and avian influenzas?

The Colorado Health Emergency Line for Public Information (COHELP) is a public support service sponsored by the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment to keep you informed on current public health or bioterrorism issues. The COHELP toll free line (1-877-462-2911) is staffed by trained information providers who give information on Influenza as well as the following topics: Smallpox, West Nile Virus, Mold and Pneumonia. COHELP's website is [www.cohelp.us](http://www.cohelp.us).

**Colorado Health Emergency Line for the Public  
COHELP: 1-877-462-2911  
[www.cohelp.us](http://www.cohelp.us)  
JCDHE <http://health.jeffco.us>**

### Other helpful resources include:

- <http://health.jeffco.us>
- <http://www.ready.gov>
- <http://www.bt.cdc.gov>
- <http://www.fema.gov>
- <http://www.redcross.org/preparedness>

For more information on influenza prevention and control, please call the JCDHE Communicable Disease Control Program at 303-232-6301.

## Stay Connected with Us!

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