



IMPORTANT Novel Influenza A (H1N1) INFORMATION

We have normal Seasonal Flu still circulating and a new Novel influenza A (H1N1) virus (swine flu) circulating. The reason why we are paying so much attention to this new virus is because new respiratory viruses are very unpredictable. Previously, people have not been exposed to this virus and we are learning about it now. Dr. Cartter, State Epidemiologist, has advised that doctors are considering that this new flu outbreak may be as severe as any regular flu season. He reminded us that *“there is no good flu year”*.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

- **Stay informed:** visit www.bethelct.gov, www.cdc.gov, and www.ct.gov/ctfluwatch/swineflu, these links have guidance documents that can help answer any additional questions that you have.
- **Avoidance:** *AVOID CONTACT WITH PERSONS WHO ARE ILL*
- **Good Health Habits Stop Germs from Making You Ill: THIS DECREASES YOUR EXPOSURE TO GERMS:**

GENERAL TIPS FOR DECREASING THE SPREAD OF GERMS:

- **Most important: WASH YOUR HANDS OFTEN WITH SOAP & WATER**, especially after you cough or sneeze. If water is not available, alcohol-based hand sanitizers can be used. Gels, rubs and hand wipes all work well, as long as they contain at least 60% alcohol. Hand wipes can be used once and then discarded. Always read and follow label instructions when using hand sanitizer.
- **COVER YOUR NOSE AND MOUTH** with a tissue when you cough or sneeze (if a tissue is not available use the crook of the arm –*SNEEZE IN YOUR SLEEVE*)
- Teach your children to keep their hands away from their face and **AVOID TOUCHING THEIR MOUTH, NOSE OR EYES.**
- Carefully dispose of tissue and then wash your hands.
- Do not share drinking cups or food

If you become ill with flu like symptoms, stay home, try to isolate yourself as best as possible and take good care of you. If your symptoms persist or worsen, please call your doctor for medical guidance.

Persons with the flu should not leave the home unless necessary for medical care. This includes when they have a fever or during the time that they are most likely to spread their infection to others (7 days after onset of symptoms in adults, and 10 days after onset of symptoms in children).

Stay home for 7 days after the first day of fever or at least 24-48 hours after all symptoms resolve, whichever is longer.

This is a rapidly evolving situation. Information concerning this outbreak is changing rapidly; therefore, we will continue to provide new information to you as it becomes available. We must be flexible & proactive to protect our families & others.

Preventing the Flu: *Good Health Habits Can Help Stop Germs*

1. **AVOID CLOSE CONTACT** Avoid close contact with people who are sick. When you are sick, keep your distance (at least 6 feet) from others to protect them from getting sick too
2. **STAY HOME WHEN YOU ARE SICK** Stay home from work, school, and errands when you are sick. Keep sick children at home. You will help prevent others catching the illness.
3. **COVER YOUR MOUTH & NOSE** Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing & sneezing. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it... then Wash Your Hands! A better practice is to cough or sneeze into the crook of your arm. **SNEEZE IN YOUR SLEEVE**
4. **CLEAN YOUR HANDS OFTEN** Cleaning your hands and the hands of your children often will help protect you from germs. When using soap and water, wash hands as long as it would take to sing “Happy Birthday” twice. An alcohol hand sanitizer can be used if hands are not visibly soiled or if warm water and soap are not available. The sanitizer must contain at least 60% alcohol to be effective
5. **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.
6. **PRACTICE GOOD HEALTH HABITS** Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids and eat nutritious foods.

Specific considerations for religious practices.....

- Forego “peace handshake, hug, or kiss
- Receive communion in hand rather than on tongue
- Allow intinction (dip Eucharist in wine) in place of wine chalice sharing
- Clergy’s and Eucharistic Ministers’ attention to hand cleanliness prior to start of service, e.g. alcohol-based hand sanitizer use.

There is an excellent editorial in “Nature” magazine titled “**Between a virus & a hard place**”. It explains why we are concerned when a new virus begins to be transmitted person to person:

<http://www.nature.com/nature/journal/v459/n7243/index.html#af>