

GET
INFORMED
STEP #1

Are You Ready?

Is a series of handouts designed to assist you and your family to plan ahead for emergencies.



For more information on Get Informed Step #1: Check out these Helpful websites:



Washington County
Emergency Services/
Emergency Management
33 W. Washington St.
Hagerstown, MD 21740
240-313-2930



www.fema.gov



www.redcross.org



www.hhs.gov



www.whitehouse.gov

Are You Ready?

WASHINGTON COUNTY
HEALTH DEPARTMENT

JANUARY 2006

Four Steps to Preparedness

STEP 1: Get Informed

Contact your local emergency management office or local American Red Cross Chapter to gather the information you will need to create a plan.

Community Hazards

Ask about the specific hazards that threaten your community (e.g. hurricanes, tornados, and earthquakes) and about your risk from those hazards. Additionally, hazard information for your local area can be obtained at www.redcross.org/service/diasaster

Community Disaster Plans

Learn about community response plans, evacuation plans, and designated emergency shelters. Ask about the emergency plans and procedures that

exist in places you and your family spend time such as places of employment, schools, and child care centers. If you do not own a vehicle or drive, find out in advance what your community's plans are for evacuating those without private transportation.

Community Warning Systems

Find out how local authorities will warn you of a pending disaster and how they will provide information to you during and after a disaster.

.....coming next flyer:

- Step 2: Make a plan (February)
- Step 3: Assemble a kit (March)
- Step 4: Maintain your plan and kit (April)

An Ounce of Prevention

Pandemic Influenza (Flu) Key Facts

1. The disease

- Pandemic flu is a type of influenza that spreads rapidly to affect most countries and regions around the world.
- Unlike the 'ordinary' flu that occurs every winter, pandemic flu can occur at any time of year.
- Pandemics of influenza have occurred sporadically throughout history—three times in the last hundred years—resulting in many deaths.
- Experts predict another pandemic will occur but cannot say exactly when it will happen. When it does, it may come in two or more waves several months apart. Each wave may last two to three months.
- Pandemic flu is more serious than 'ordinary' flu. As much as a quarter of the population may be affected—maybe more.
- Pandemic flu is likely to cause the same symptoms as 'ordinary' flu. The symptoms may be more severe because nobody will have any immunity or protection against that particular virus.
- A Serious pandemic is likely to cause many deaths, disrupt the daily life of many people and cause intense pressure on health and other services.
- Each pandemic is different, and until the virus starts circulating, it is impossible to predict it's full effects.

2. What is it caused by?

- Pandemics of flu are due to the emergence of a new flu virus which is markedly different from recently circulating strains. Few—if any—people will have any immunity to this new virus. This allows it to spread widely, easily and to cause more serious illness.

3. Who's at risk?

- Once a flu pandemic starts everybody will be at risk of catching pandemic flu. Certain groups may be at greater risk than others: until the virus starts circulating we will not know for sure who the risk groups will be.

4. Is there a vaccine to protect against pandemic flu?

- Medicines called antivirals can be used to **treat** pandemic flu but their effectiveness won't be known until the pandemic virus is circulating.
- There is no vaccine ready to protect against pandemic flu. A vaccine to protect against pandemic flu cannot be made until the new virus has been identified. Before a pandemic starts it is difficult to predict what strain will cause it and even then, predictions may prove wrong. Also, the new virus may have changed enough for a pre-prepared vaccine to be ineffective.

5. What can I do?

- You can reduce, but not eliminate, the risk of catching or spreading influenza during a pandemic by:
 - ▲ Covering your nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing, using a tissue when possible
 - ▲ Disposing of dirty tissues promptly and carefully—bag and bin them
 - ▲ Avoiding non-essential travel and large crowds whenever possible
 - ▲ Maintaining good basic hygiene, for example washing your hands frequently with soap and water to reduce the spread of the virus from your hands to your face, or to other people.
 - ▲ Cleaning hard surfaces (e.g. kitchen worktops, door handles) frequently, using a normal cleaning product
 - ▲ Making sure your children follow this advice
 - If you do catch flu:
 - ▲ Stay at home and rest
 - ▲ Take medicines such as aspirin or ibuprofen to relieve the symptoms (following the instructions with the medicines). **Children under 16 must not be given aspirin or ready made flu remedies containing aspirin**
 - ▲ Drink plenty of fluids
- These measures are for your own health and to avoid



Word Jumble

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using the circled letters above, complete the following phrase

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