

Pandemic Flu and Other Issues: Be Prepared – A Good Motto for all of us!

Compiled by UA Life & Work Connections, Worksite Wellness Program,
and UA Campus Health, 8/06.

There is a sense of security that comes from being prepared, of having things in order when the unexpected arises. Whether an earthquake would strike Tucson (remotely possible), or some businesses would temporarily close due to a flu outbreak, it can help to have needed resources available. Below are listed some websites that can help you prepare for emergencies.

What Would Happen in a Pandemic Flu Crisis?

<http://www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/tab3.html>

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AZ Department of Health Services

The AZ Department of Health Services has a pandemic flu response plan that can be viewed at: <http://www.azdhs.gov/pandemicflu/index.htm>

Just in Case

The National Family Caregiver Support Program of the Department of Health and Human Services has a 12 page document which covers the basics for emergency readiness for older adults and caregivers. An excellent resource!

http://www.aoa.gov/PROF/aoaprogram/caregiver/overview/Just_in_Case030706_links.pdf

Flu Vaccinations

For current Center for Disease Control recommendations on flu shots, go to: <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/keyfacts.htm>

For information about the flu from UA Campus Health, go to:

http://www.health.arizona.edu/webfiles/health_topics_influenza.htm

For information about the Flu Program from Life & Work Connections, go to:

<http://lifework.arizona.edu/wsw/fluShots.php>

Avian Flu Information

The Center for Disease Control gives up to date information on the Avian Flu:

<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/avian/>

How Viruses Spread

The College of Pharmacy Practice, <http://www.dotpharmacy.co.uk/up1317.pdf>

Post-Disaster Safety Checklist

http://www.aoa.gov/ELDFAM/Disaster_Assistance/Post_disaster_checklist.doc

Uncertainty about what and what not to do immediately following a disaster can intensify an already critical situation. Different types of disasters may call for different precautions before and during an emergency. Whether natural or man-made, the first priority following a disaster is the personal safety of everyone involved. Post-disaster measures can be taken to increase the safety of individuals affected by a disaster as well as those in positions to offer help. The following information is intended as a guide to protect individuals and their families in the immediate aftermath of disaster. Local officials and emergency relief workers will arrive on the scene after a disaster, but depending on the damages, they may not be able to get to everyone quickly. Taking the precautions discussed below could prevent additional injury and damage, protect individuals and families, and make the home safe until help arrives.

For your personal safety:

- Check yourself for injuries immediately following a disaster. You will be better able to care for others if you are uninjured or have taken care of your own first-aid needs.
- Do not venture out until an “all-clear” is broadcast.
- Avoid drinking tap water and/or well water until local emergency management officials declare that the water is safe to drink.
- Avoid contaminated foods.
- Avoid touching fallen or low-hanging wires or trees and objects in contact with or near power lines.
- Avoid using elevators until advised by local emergency management officials that the elevators are safe.
- Beware of roads, bridges, and porches that may have weakened and are at risk of collapsing, do not drive in water more than six inches deep.
- Turn off all utilities to prevent further damage and minimize future hazards.
- If you are away from home when disaster strikes, do not return home until local officials say that it is safe to return to your dwelling.
- Open closet doors and cabinet doors with caution. Contents inside may have shifted and could fall causing further damage or injury.
- Use the telephone only to report life-threatening situations, and to manage and execute your responsibilities in the disaster.
- Check out damages in your home using a flashlight. Do not use lights, matches, or candles, and do not turn on electrical switches.

How to Avoid Picking up Germs at the Workplace

We all know we should stay home when we are sick, or when we feel like we're coming down with something. But unfortunately, sometimes sick people come to work. How can you protect yourself from their germs?

Is it important to wash your hands?

http://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/diseases/washing_hands.html

Simply put, yes. Hand washing is the single most effective way to prevent the spread of infections. You can spread certain "germs" (a general term for microbes like viruses and bacteria) casually by touching another person. You can also catch germs when you touch contaminated objects or surfaces and then you touch your face (mouth, eyes, and nose).

"Good" hand washing techniques include using an adequate amount of soap, rubbing the hands together to create friction, and rinsing under running water. The use of gloves is not a substitute for hand washing.

There is additional information in *OSH Answers* about how the common cold is transmitted by contaminated hands.

Also see "Influenza" and "Pandemic Influenza". Other steps that can be taken to reduce the spread of infections are discussed in the *OSH Answers* document "Good Hygiene Practices - Reducing the Spread of Infections and Viruses".

Please note: In some workplaces, universal precautions should be followed when workers are exposed to blood and certain other body fluids. Please see the *OSH Answers* document Universal Precautions for more complete information.



When should I wash my hands?

Different situations where people can pick up "germs" include:

- when hands are visibly soiled,
- after using the washroom (includes changing diapers),
- after blowing your nose or after sneezing in your hands,
- before and after eating, handling food, drinking or smoking,
- after touching raw meat, poultry, or fish,
- after handling garbage,
- visiting or caring for sick people,
- handling pets, animals or animal waste.

Ensuring that employees wash their hands properly after using the washroom is very important in reducing disease transmission of stomach "flus" (which really is

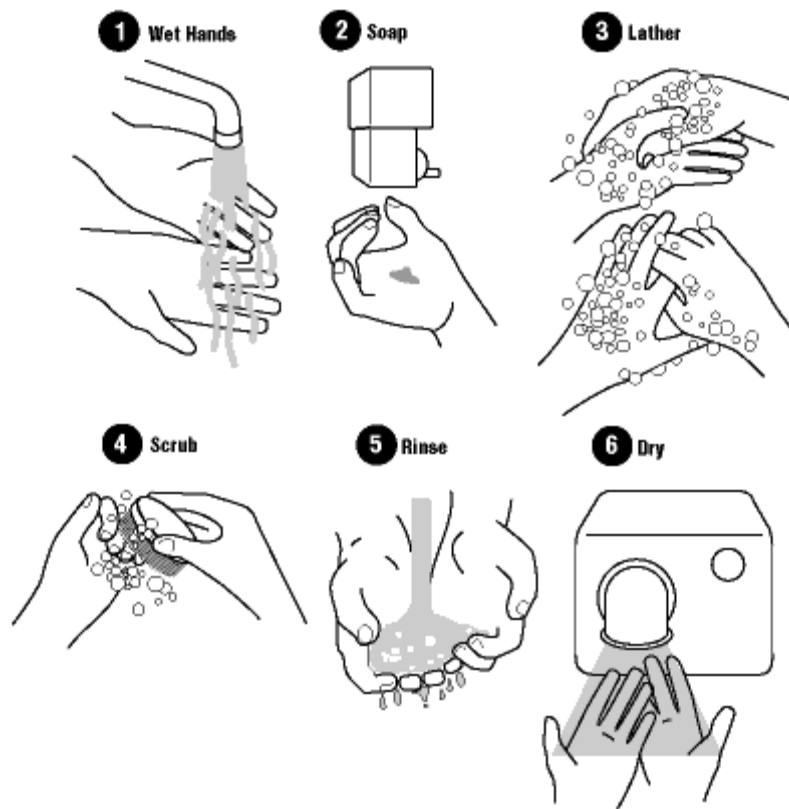
not a "flu" or influenza) and other gastrointestinal infections. Using soap and lathering up is very important (rinsing hands in water only is not as effective). Use comfortably warm, running water. Hands should be washed for a minimum of 10 seconds - longer if the hands are visibly soiled. To help people (especially children) wash long enough, one option may be to sing a short song such as "Happy Birthday". The idea of surgeons scrubbing for an operation (as on TV) is very similar.



How do I properly wash my hands?

For effective hand washing, follow these steps:

- remove any rings or other jewelry,
- use warm water and wet your hands thoroughly,
- use soap (1-3 mL) and lather very well,
- scrub your hands, between your fingers, wrists, and forearms with soap for 10 seconds,
- scrub under your nails,
- rinse thoroughly,
- turn off the taps/faucets with a paper towel,
- dry your hands with a single use towel or air dryer,
- protect your hands from touching dirty surfaces as you leave the bathroom.



Other tips include:

- Cover cuts with bandages and wear gloves for added protection (cuts are very vulnerable to infections).

- Artificial nails and chipped nail polish have been associated with an increase in the number of bacteria on the fingernails. Be sure to clean the nails properly.
- Keep your hands away from your eyes, nose or mouth.
- Assume that contact with any human body fluids is infectious.
- Liquid soap in disposable containers is best. If using reusable containers, they should be washed and dried before refilling. If using a bar of soap, be sure to set it on a rack that allows water to drain or use small bars that can be changed frequently.



What about antibacterial soaps and waterless hand scrubs?

While it is true that regular soap and water does not actually kill microorganisms (they create a slippery surface that allows the organisms to "slide off"), antibacterial soaps are typically considered to be "overkill" for most purposes. The exception may be in a hospital where special situations are present (e.g., before invasive procedures, when caring for severely immuno-compromised patients, critical care areas, intensive care nurseries, etc.). Antibacterial agents should be chosen carefully based on their active ingredients and characteristics, and when persistent antimicrobial activity on the hands is desired.

When there is no soap or water available, one alternative is to use waterless hand scrubs. Some of these products are made of ethyl alcohol mixed with emollients (skin softeners) and other agents. They are often available as a rinse, or on wipes or towelettes. They can be used by paramedics, home care attendants, or other mobile workers where hand washing facilities are not available. However, these agents are not effective when the hands are heavily contaminated with dirt, blood, or other organic materials. In addition, waterless hand scrubs may have a drying effect on the skin and may have odours which may be irritating to some users.



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Other Strategies to Keep the Germs Away at Work

Suggestions from UA Life & Work Connections, <http://lifework.arizona.edu> and the University of Arizona Campus Health Department, http://www.health.arizona.edu/webfiles/health_topics.htm

- If you share a telephone with another person, cleaning it with a wipe that contains ethyl alcohol can disinfect it.
- Using an ethyl alcohol wipe to clean commonly touched surfaces like door handles, countertops, and computer keyboards can reduce the chances of picking up a virus or bacterial infection.

- If a person working in close quarters to you appears to have a respiratory illness, either talk to them directly or bring it to the attention of your supervisor as to how you can make your work environment safe.
- If you need to cough or sneeze, use a tissue, then discard it in the trash. Remember to wash your hands!
- Avoid touching your face with your hands. Germs can enter the body through your eyes, ears, nose and mouth.
- Keep a hand sanitizer at your desk to clean your hands when you feel it's necessary.
- There is some research suggesting that after contact with someone who has an upper respiratory infection (like a cold), nasal irrigation (sniffing salt water to clean the nasal passages) may be effective in preventing the transfer of the virus.