

H1N1 Pandemic Flu Response communication considerations

August 31, 2009

**Dianne Shipley, Health Educator/Media Liaison
Sarasota County Health Department**



Emergency and Risk Communications

People perceive threats on a very personal level.

- What does this mean to me?
- What does this mean to my loved ones?



Common Communications Issues

As communicators, we are judged by these common questions:

- Was it timely?**
- Can I trust this source?**
- Are they being honest?**



The five common crisis communication mistakes are:

- Mixed messages from multiple experts
- Information released late
- Condescending attitudes
- Not countering rumors and myths in real time,
- Public power struggles and confusion



Communication Strategies

- **Be first**
- **Be right.**
- **Be credible**
- **Express empathy**



Promote action

This is a good opportunity to share what we recommend and where to go if they want to know more, now or later.

Give people things to do:

Reduces anxiety; helps restore a sense of self-control.

Give people things to do that they can actually carry out. (e.g. cover coughs, wash hands, make a plan for child care in case children become ill, workplace arrangements to deal with sickness and absenteeism.)

Minimize confusion - provide the public with protective actions that are timely and consistent with state and regional communication.



Taking Information to Action

- To facilitate voluntary actions conducive to optimal health for the individual or community.
- The Media
- Employees/Worksites
- Community Partners
- Healthcare Organizations
- Conduits to Vulnerable Populations



Reinforce Key Actions

Employee Communication

- Flu Information Lines
- Newsletters
- Flyers/Posters/Brochures
- On-Line Communication...use trusted sources
- Closed Circuit TV options



Reinforce Key Actions (cont'd)

What should I use for hand cleaning?

Washing hands with soap and running water (for as long as it takes to sing the "Happy Birthday" song twice) will help protect against many germs. When soap and running water are not available, wipes or gels with alcohol in them can be used (the gels should be rubbed into your hands until they are dry).*

If your child is sick

What can I do if my child gets sick?

If your child is 5 years or older and otherwise healthy and gets flu-like symptoms, including a fever and/or cough, consult your doctor as needed and make sure your child gets plenty of rest and drinks enough fluids.

If your child is younger than 5, or of any age and has a medical condition like asthma, diabetes, or a neurologic problem and develops flu-like symptoms, including a fever and/or cough, call your doctor or get medical attention. This is because younger children and children who have chronic medical conditions (like asthma or diabetes) may be at higher risk of serious complications from influenza infection, including the new H1N1. Talk to your doctor early if you are worried about your child's illness.

What if my child seems very sick?

Even children who have always been healthy before or had the flu before can get a severe case of flu.

Call or take your child to a doctor right away if your child of any age has:

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish or gray skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Not waking up or not interacting
- Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough
- Has other conditions (like heart or lung disease, diabetes, or asthma) and develops flu-like symptoms, including a fever and/or cough.

Can my child go to school, day care or camp if he or she is sick?

No. Your child should stay home to rest and to avoid giving the flu to other children.

When can my child go back to school after having the flu?

Keep your child home from school, day care or camp for at least 24 hours after their fever is gone. (Their fever should be gone without them having taken a fever-reducing medicine.) A fever is defined as 100°F or 37.8°C.

*Though the scientific evidence is not as extensive as that on hand washing and alcohol-based sanitizers, other hand sanitizers that do not contain alcohol may be useful for killing flu germs on hands in settings where alcohol-based products are prohibited.

For more information, visit
www.cdc.gov or www.flu.gov
or call
1-800-CDC-INFO



Seasonal and Novel H1N1 Flu:

A Guide for Parents



Reinforce Key Actions (cont'd)

Sarasota County Health Department

H1N1 (SWINE) FLU: STAY HEALTHY AND INFORMED

1 Before leaving home,
ASK YOURSELF, DO I OR A FAMILY MEMBER HAVE...
Fever? Sore Throat? Muscle Aches? Cough?

2 If "yes" to the questions above,
DON'T SPREAD THE FLU:

- Stay home and keep sick children home until there is no fever for 24 hours, without use of fever-reducing medications.
- If symptoms get worse, contact your healthcare provider. See emergency warning signs below.

3 Flu viruses are spread through coughs and sneezes.
DECREASE YOUR CHANCE OF BEING INFECTED:

- Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or the inside of your elbow
- Wash hands often with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand cleaner, especially after coughing or sneezing.
- Avoid close contact with people who might be ill, and avoid crowded settings.
- Wipe down hard surfaces with a household cleaner effective against flu.

4 Stay Informed.
KNOW WHAT YOU CAN DO ABOUT THE FLU:

- Sarasota County Health Department:
www.sarasotahealth.org | 941.861.2800
- Florida Flu Information
www.myflusafety.com | 877-352-3581 (Toll Free) English/Spanish/Creole
- CDC TTY
888-232-6348

EMERGENCY WARNING SIGNS IN ADULTS

Seek urgent medical attention if:

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting

EMERGENCY WARNING SIGNS IN CHILDREN

Seek urgent medical attention if:

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Not waking up or not interacting
- Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held

Sharing Resources

Telephone:

Local Flu Information Line

Sarasota County Health Department: 941-861-2800

Re

Florida Department of Health: Toll-free:

877- 352-3581. Live operators available from

8 a.m. to 8 p.m. in ENGLISH, SPANISH AND HAITIAN
CREOLE

Centers for Disease Control: 800-CDC-INFO, 800-232-4636.

AVAILABLE IN ENGLISH AND SPANISH CDC TTY: 888-232-6348

More information is available at www.myflusafety.com



For Additional Information

H1N1 Risk communications podcast from CDC...

<http://www2a.cdc.gov/podcasts/player.asp?f=11509>

Risk Communication:

<http://www.pandemicflu.gov/news/rcommunication.html>

