

Make Flu Prevention a Priority

By Josh Fuss, Disaster Director, Marathon County Chapter
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As our children head back to school and families throughout our community prepare for the rest of the year, it can be easy to overlook other pressing matters. With the recent attention to H1N1 (swine flu) and the approaching flu season, preventing the flu and preparing for this flu season should be a high priority.

September is Preparedness Month at the American Red Cross. While we continue to encourage everyone to assemble an emergency preparedness kit and make a family emergency plan, we would like to take this opportunity to help your family prepare for the coming flu season. There are a few steps you can take to prevent the spread of infection:

- * Wash your hands frequently with soap and hot water or an alcohol based sanitizer and encourage others to do the same.
- * Practice good health habits such as eating a balanced diet, exercising regularly, and allowing yourself time for an adequate amount of rest and sleep.
- * Minimize contact with sick people, and if you or your child becomes ill minimize contact with others. If your child is sick, keep them home from school. If you are sick do not go to work.
- * Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth.
- * Cover your mouth and nose with tissues when you cough and sneeze, or cough or sneeze into the crook of your elbow.
- * Determine whether you or anyone in your family is at high risk of complications from flu infection: Those who are pregnant, have chronic medical conditions, children over 6 months old, people age 50 and older and health care providers are considered high risk for flu related complications.
- * Get a Flu shot. Obtaining the influenza vaccine is one of the most effective ways to minimize the risk of seasonal flu infection.

You can prepare for the possibility of influenza infection in your family, business or organization:

- * Families should determine who will be the caregiver for sick family members and establish plans to meet the needs of the sick and other family members if a parent or child becomes ill.
- * Businesses and other organizations should consider adopting employment policies that encourage workers to stay home from work when sick.

Continue checking websites like pandemic.wisconsin.gov, cdc.gov, and redcross.org for more information about the H1N1 and seasonal flu vaccines, and flu prevention and preparedness.

The Red Cross helps people prevent, prepare for and respond to emergencies. Last year, almost a million volunteers and 35,000 employees helped victims of almost 75,000 disasters; taught lifesaving skills to millions; and helped U.S. service members separated from their families stay connected. Almost 4 million people gave blood through the Red Cross, the largest U.S. supplier of blood and blood products. The American Red Cross is part of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. An average of 91 cents of every dollar the Red Cross spends is invested in humanitarian services and programs. The Red Cross is not a government agency; it relies on donations of time, money, and blood to do its work.

For more information about the American Red Cross, contact the North Central Wisconsin Region at (800) 939-4052 or visit our website at redcrossncwi.com.