

## What to do about the flu

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has recently identified a new strain of flu. Commonly called the Swine Flu, this new strain is identified as the H1N1 outbreak. Yesterday, the CDC reported 91 confirmed cases of the H1N1 virus in the United States. Most of these cases are relatively mild, however two deaths have been confirmed in the US and several persons remain hospitalized in varying conditions. Worldwide the disease appears to be spreading and has been identified on three different continents.

While the CDC has issued a travelers advisory for persons planning to go to Mexico <http://www.cdc.gov/travel> and <http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/>. While some border states are taking measures to provide social distance by suspending high school athletics for a period of time.

In Arkansas we have not moved to any of these precautions as we do not have any verifiable cases of the H1N1 at this time; no Swine Flu cases have been confirmed. For a daily update on Arkansas you may go to: [http://www.healthyarkansas.com/cdc\\_swineflu.html](http://www.healthyarkansas.com/cdc_swineflu.html) Influenza is thought to **spread mainly person-to-person** through coughing or sneezing of infected people. Following are some suggestions about how individuals and local congregations can reduce the spread of this and other infections.

### What Can Individuals do?

*The CDC recommends the following:*

- o **Take everyday actions to stay healthy.**
- o **Cover your nose and mouth** with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- o **Wash your hands** often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hands cleaners are also effective.
- o **Avoid touching** your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread that way.
- o **Stay home** if you get sick. CDC recommends that you stay home from work or school and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them.
- o **Follow public health advice** regarding school closures, avoiding crowds and other social distancing measures.
- o **Develop a family emergency plan** as a precaution. This should include storing a supply of food, medicines, facemasks, alcohol-based hand rubs and other essential supplies.

### What can churches do?

UMCOR makes the following suggestions:

- o Consider how your community and worship practices can be changed to **reduce virus transmission.**
- o **Careful frequent hand washing**; no spitting; covered coughing or sneezing
- o **Consider choosing an alternative loving greeting** to shaking hands, hugging and kissing
- o **Provide ample supplies** of soap, hand sanitizer, tissues, trash receptacles, and regular trash disposal
- o **Use gloves and masks when emptying trashcans**
- o **Close water fountains**
- o **Avoid worship, community work and school when sick**
- o **Sanitize** toys and nursery equipment regularly

Information may be found at: <http://new.qbgm-umc.org/umcor/work/health/birdflu/churches/>

While we are praying about persons infected with the N1N1 flu virus each of us can take measures to reduce the spread of not only the Swine Flu but all contagious diseases.