Public Health Informer

2016-2017 Seasonal Influenza

Influenza (the flu) is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses. It can cause mild to severe illness, and at times can lead to death. Some people, such as older people, young children, and people with certain health conditions, are at high risk for serious flu complications. While flu activity does vary from season to season, peak activity typically occurs between October and May. The best way to prevent the flu is by getting vaccinated every year.

The CDC recommends that only injectable flu shots should be used for the 2016-2017 flu season. Options for this season include:

• Standard dose flu shots
• A high dose shot for older people
• A shot made with adjuvant for older people, “FLUAD™”
• A shot made with virus grown in cell culture, “FLUCELVAX™”
• A shot made using a vaccine production technology (recombinant vaccine) that does not require the use of flu virus

Live attenuated influenza vaccine (LAIV), or the nasal spray vaccine, is not recommended.

According to the CDC, all 2016-2017 flu vaccines protect against A/California/7/2009 (H1N1)pdm09-like virus, A/Hong Kong/4801/2014 (H3N2)-like virus, and B/Brisbane/60/2008-like virus (B/Victoria lineage). The four component vaccines are recommended to include the same three viruses above and the B/Phuket/3073/2013-like virus (B/Yamagata lineage).

Take action to fight the flu:

• CDC recommends a yearly flu vaccine as the first and most important step in protecting against flu viruses.
• Cough or sneeze in your sleeve or cover your nose and mouth with a tissue. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
• Wash your hands often with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol based hand sanitizer.
• Disinfect commonly touched surfaces.
• Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth. Germs get into your body this way.
• Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
• If you get the flu, antiviral drugs can help make your illness more mild; be sure and finish all the medication.
• Stay home if you are ill!
Ebola: The First Ebola Epidemic the World Has Ever Known

The 2014 Ebola outbreak was the largest Ebola outbreak in history and the first Ebola outbreak in West Africa. Ebola is a rare and deadly disease caused by infection with one of the Ebola virus species that can affect humans and nonhuman primates. According to the CDC, four of the five virus strains occur in an animal host native to Africa. The natural host of Ebola virus is still unknown, but most researchers believe that it is animal-borne and that bats are most likely the natural host of the virus.

Since the Ebola outbreak began in 2014, most of the Ebola cases have been concentrated in Guinea, Sierra Leone, and Liberia. The CDC identifies Guinea, Sierra Leone, and Liberia as countries with former widespread transmission. As of April 13, 2016, in these countries there have been a total of 28,616 cases (suspected, probable, and confirmed). There have been 15,227 laboratory confirmed cases and 11,310 total deaths. These countries now have successful control measures established.

In the United States, there were 4 total cases (suspected, probable and confirmed). All 4 cases were laboratory confirmed, resulting in one death. The CDC identifies the United States as a previously affected country, having had locally acquired or imported Ebola cases. At least 42 days have elapsed since the last day that any person in the U.S. had contact with a person confirmed with Ebola. The 42 days represents twice the incubation period for Ebola illness.

There is still no FDA approved vaccine or medication available for Ebola. Experimental treatments and vaccines are under development but they have not been fully tested for safety or effectiveness. Treatment of Ebola is dependent on the symptoms that appear. The following basic interventions can significantly improve the chances of survival:

- Providing intravenous fluids (IV) and balancing electrolytes (body salts)
- Maintaining oxygen status and blood pressure
- Treating other infections if they occur

If you travel to any area affected by the Ebola outbreak, take precautionary steps to avoid getting infected

- Practice careful hygiene (wash your hands with soap and water or use alcohol based hand sanitizer)
- Do not handle items that may have come in contact with an infected person’s blood or bodily fluids
- Avoid funeral or burial rituals that may have come in contact with an infected person’s blood or body fluids
- Avoid contact with bats and nonhuman primates or blood, fluids, and raw meat prepared form these animals
- Avoid facilities in West Africa where Ebola patients are being treated
- Avoid contact with semen from a man who has Ebola until you know Ebola is gone from his semen
- After you return, monitor your health for 21 days and seek medical care immediately if you develop symptoms of Ebola, which include: fever, severe headache, muscle pain, weakness, fatigue, diarrhea, vomiting, abdominal pain, and unexplained hemorrhage (bleeding or bruising)

For more information go [www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola](http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola)
Public Health Matters:

Tips on Cleaning Mold After a Flood

Fort Bend County has suffered record flooding not seen since 1994. Residents across the county have seen their homes flood and are dealing with what happens after the water resides. In a home that is not able to dry within 24-48 hours, mold growth is inevitable.

Exposure to mold can affect your health. Mold can lead to asthma attacks, eye and skin irritation, allergic reactions, and may cause severe infections in people with weakened immune systems. Flood water may have carried sewage or chemicals into the home, which may have exposed your family to viruses, bacteria, disease carriers (such as mosquitos), parasites, and mold. Avoid contaminated buildings and water as much as you can.

The CDC recommends you use the following steps and guidelines to protect yourself and your family during mold clean up.

Prepare to Clean Up

- Call your insurance company and take pictures of the home and your belongings.
- Throw away or move outside anything that was wet with flood water and can’t be cleaned or dried completely within 24-48 hours.

Protect Yourself

- Use specific protection for different cleanup activities.
- Identify people who should and should not be doing clean up activities due to their health condition.

Be Careful with Bleach

Many people use bleach for cleanup. Make sure you use it safely by wearing gloves, a mask, goggles to protect yourself, and are in a well ventilated area.

- NEVER mix bleach with ammonia or any other cleaning product.
- NEVER use bleach straight from the bottle to clean surfaces. Use no more than 1 cup of bleach per 1 gallon of water when you’re cleaning up mold. If you are using stronger, professional strength bleach use 1/2 cup of bleach per gallon of water.


Or [http://www.cdc.gov/mold/faqs.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/mold/faqs.htm)
Areas with Zika—South Florida

**New area in Florida identified with mosquito-borne spread of Zika**

On October 13, Florida added a new area with mosquito-borne spread of Zika. This is an additional 1-square-mile area in Miami-Dade County. The CDC has updated its travel and testing guidance to apply recommendations to all of Miami-Dade County. Pregnant women should still consider postponing any travel to all parts of Miami-Dade County.

**Red and Yellow Area Designation**

The CDC designates areas of Zika transmission prevention in the U.S. as red or yellow.

- **Red area**: a geographic area where local, state, and CDC officials have determined that the intensity of Zika virus transmission presents a significant risk to pregnant women. It is determined by factors including geographic distribution of cases, number of cases identified, and known or suspected links between cases and population density.

- **Yellow area**: a geographic area where local transmission has been identified, but evidence is lacking that the intensity of transmission is comparable to that in a red area. Although the specific level of risk in yellow areas is unknown, there is still a risk to pregnant women. Additionally, areas adjacent or close to red areas may have a greater likelihood of local Zika virus transmission and are considered to pose a risk to pregnant women.

The red areas include a 4.5 mile area of Miami Beach and the additional 1 square mile of Little River in Miami-Dade County, Florida. The rest of Miami-Dade county is a yellow area.

On November 5th, volunteers and Fort Bend County staff met at St. John’s Methodist Church to perform a Post Disaster Assessment along the 100 year flood plain of the Brazos River, in areas that were affected by the May and June floods.

The C.A.S.P.E.R. will help the County assess current and future response and recovery efforts across Fort Bend County. It also allowed us to do the following:

- Provide families with referrals for recovery resources
- Assess the impact of flooding on individual families
- Evaluate family preparedness levels
- Assess the needs of affected communities and provide partner agencies with necessary feedback for future assistance
Disease Spotlight: Salmonellosis

With the Holiday Season upon us, the importance of food safety and preparation is key in order to avoid foodborne illnesses like Salmonella poisoning.

Salmonella is a bacteria that causes an estimated one million foodborne illnesses in the United States every year. The most common symptoms of individuals infected with Salmonella are diarrhea, fever, and abdominal cramps between 12-72 hours after infection.

The illness usually lasts 4 to 7 days and most people recover without treatment. However, individuals may be hospitalized if diarrhea is severe. Children under the age of 5 years and individuals with weakened immune systems are more likely to have severe infections. The CDC estimates that every year approximately 1.2 million illnesses and about 450 deaths occur due to non-typhoidal Salmonella.

In 2016, to date, there have been six Salmonella outbreak investigations conducted by the CDC. The investigations linked Salmonella infections to Good Earth Egg Company Shell Eggs (Salmonella Oranienburg), Alfalfa Sprouts (Salmonella Reading and Salmonella Abony), Live Poultry (Salmonella Infections), Wonderful Pistachios (Salmonella Montevideo and Salmonella Senftenberg), Alfalfa Sprouts (Salmonella Muenchen and Salmonella Kentucky) and Raw Mean Organic Shake & Meal Products (Salmonella Virchow).

There is no vaccine to prevent Salmonella. According to the CDC, the best way to prevent Salmonella infection is to follow these tips:

- Cook poultry, ground beef, and eggs thoroughly. Do not eat or drink foods containing raw eggs or raw (unpasteurized) milk.
- If you are served undercooked meat, poultry or eggs in a restaurant, don’t hesitate to send it back to the kitchen for further cooking.
- Wash hands, kitchen work surfaces, and utensils with soap and warm water immediately after they have been in contact with raw meat or poultry.
- Be particularly careful with foods prepared for infants, the elderly, and the immunocompromised.
- Wash hands with soap after handling reptiles, birds, or baby chicks, and after contact with pet feces.
- Avoid direct contact or even indirect contact with reptiles (turtles, iguanas, other lizards, snakes) at the same time as caring for infants or immunocompromised persons.
- Don’t work with raw poultry or meat at the same time as caring for an infant (e.g. feed, change, diaper).
- Mother’s milk is the safest food for young infants. Breastfeeding helps to prevent Salmonellosis and many other health problems.

For more information visit www.cdc.gov/salmonella
Fort Bend Secure: A Bio-Defense Network, is a proactive initiative to establish **CLOSED Dispensing Sites** with businesses throughout the county.

**CLOSED Dispensing Sites:**

- Are locations that are operated by private businesses, that will provide medications at no cost for their specific population (i.e., employees and their families).
- Minimize the impact of the emergency on businesses by maintaining continuity of operations, and on the community by saving lives.
- Are not open to the public.
- Distribute medications at no cost to recipients.

If your organization chooses to become a CLOSED Dispensing Site, you will have a tremendous opportunity to combat the impact of a public health threat or emergency. Together with your local public health agency, you will be able to address an assortment of public health issues in a ground-breaking way.

By becoming a CLOSED Dispensing Site, your business will be better protected in the event of a public health emergency. You’ll receive and dispense medications and medical supplies directly to your employees and their families. By providing the materials and support they need, your business will help to ensure the general health and well being of not just your employees, but all of those affected by the public health emergency. With your cooperation, you will also be helping your community and your Health Department concentrate their efforts on dispensing medications to the general public.

To learn more about this program and how to become a Closed Dispensing Site partner please contact:

**Fort Bend County Health & Human Services**

Strategic National Stockpile Coordinator

Office: 281-238-3514

php@fortbendcountytx.gov
Although hurricane season is months away, it’s not too early to get prepared! One way to prepare is by registering with Enable Fort Bend. Enable Fort Bend is a system that allows emergency management personnel to be aware of those with **medical and functional needs** in Fort Bend County.

**Who should Register?**

Anyone at home who needs medical assistance including:

- Persons with a disability
- Persons with hearing and vision impairment
- Persons with hearing and vision impairment
- Persons requiring medical equipment
- Persons who anticipate need assistance in an emergency

**Why Should I register?**

During a disaster or an emergency, people with functional and medical needs may require assistance if they experience power outages, need medications or need medical support.

This survey will help identify individuals who may need assistance during an emergency and assist in planning for such an event.

**Don’t forget to be prepared! Make a Kit, Have a Plan, Stay Informed!**

Health & Human Services is Fort Bend County’s principal agency responsible for protecting the health of county residents and providing essential human services, especially for those least able to help themselves.

The Public Health team works to protect the health and welfare of the citizens of Fort Bend County through disease prevention and intervention, and through the promotion of a healthy community environment.