

October, 2006

Dear Families,

In the media these days, everyone is hearing about avian flu and the ability of scientists and the medical professionals to track its spread around the world. It is important to know, however, that avian flu is not occurring in the United States. It is also important to know that it may arrive to our country in the near future. Although avian flu has infected millions of birds, it has not spread easily to people or sustained human to human transmission.

Scientists and public health officials are concerned that the avian flu may change, infecting people and spreading easily from person-to-person. This would cause a worldwide flu outbreak, called a pandemic. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention and the World Health Organization are urging businesses including colleges and universities to develop a response plan in the event avian flu would arrive in the United States. Hiram College is working in collaboration with the Portage County Health Department to develop our college community plan.

The Pandemic Event Planning Committee at Hiram College urges families to take measures to limit the spread of germs and prevent colds and flu now and in the event a pandemic would occur. ***The Health Center of Hiram College will be giving students first opportunity to receive their flu shots the week of October 9th. Flu shots for the Hiram community and general public as well as the students will begin the week of October 16th. Encourage your student to take preventative measures and call for an appointment.***

To limit the spread of germs and prevent colds and flu now and during a flu pandemic:

- Wash hands frequently with soap and water for 20 seconds. Set a good example for children in the home.
- Cover coughs and sneezes with tissues or by coughing or sneezing into the inside of your elbow. Teach children in the home these protective measures.
- Stay away from people who are sick. People who are sick should stay home from work or school and avoid other people until they are better.

Plan for an extended stay at home during a flu pandemic:

- Ask your employer about how business will continue during a pandemic.
- Ask your employer if you can work from home during a flu pandemic.
- Plan for a possible reduction or loss of income, if you are unable to work or your place of employment is closed.
- Check with your employer or union about leave policies.
- Plan home learning activities and exercises. Have materials, such as books, on hand.
- Plan recreational activities that your children can do at home.

Items to have on hand for an extended stay at home:

1. Non-perishable foods such as:

- Ready to eat canned meats, fruits, vegetables, soups
- Protein or fruit bars, dry cereal or granola
- Peanut butter and jelly
- Crackers
- Dried fruit, nuts, trail mix
- Canned or boxed juices
- Bottled water
- Canned or jarred baby food
- Baby formula
- Pet food

2. Health and emergency supplies:

- Prescribed medical supplies such as glucose and blood pressure monitoring
- Soap and water or alcohol based hand wash
- Medicines for fever, such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen
- Thermometer
- Vitamins
- Fluids with electrolytes such as Pedialyte
- Flashlight with extra batteries
- Portable radio with extra batteries
- Manual can opener
- Garbage bags
- Tissues, toilet paper, disposable diapers

If someone in your family develops flu symptoms (fever, cough, muscle aches):

- Drink plenty of fluids.
- Keep the ill person as comfortable as possible. Rest is important.
- For fever, sore throat and muscle aches, use ibuprofen or acetaminophen.
- *Do not use aspirin in children or teenagers* – it can cause Reye’s Syndrome, a life-threatening illness.
- Sponging with tepid water lowers fever only during the period of sponging. *Do not sponge with alcohol.*
- Keep tissues and a trash bag for their disposal within reach of the ill person.
- All members of the household should wash their hands frequently.
- Keep other family members and visitors away from the ill person.
- Contact a healthcare provider for further advice especially if the ill person is having difficulty breathing or getting worse.

Recommendations may change during the course of an influenza pandemic. Up-to-date guidance will be available from your healthcare provider and at the following websites:

- **Portage County Health Department** – www.co.portage.oh.us
- **Official U.S. Government website with information on planning for individuals and families** – www.pandemicflu.gov