

PRESS RELEASE

FSU College of Medicine Expert Advises Prudence in Light of Swine Flu

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TALLAHASSEE, FL - As the cases of swine flu increase in the United States and around the world, here are observations and suggestions from Dr. Robert Brooks. He's associate dean for health affairs at the Florida State University College of Medicine, an expert in infectious diseases and former secretary of the Florida Department of Health:

1. Be prudent, but don't panic. Very few humans will have any innate resistance to this strain of flu, he said, so expect the number of cases to mount for a while. "My sense is this is just the beginning of the epidemic," Brooks said. "I think we're going to see more states added to the list" – including Florida, which attracts people from all over the world. "Who knows how many of the people from Mexico visited Disney World or other Florida destinations?" he said. Brooks also wonders whether spring break played a role in spreading swine flu from Mexico to the U.S.
2. Realize that the flu shot you got last winter won't work on this flu. But so far, at least in the United States, the mortality rate is low, and the disease has responded to the anti-viral drugs Tamiflu and Relenza. That's encouraging, Brooks said, noting that the Centers for Disease Control has started to release its stockpile of those medicines and other supplies to the states.
3. Be aware of CDC and World Health Organization travel restrictions. Plus, use common sense. If your immune system is not 100-percent, reconsider that cross-country trip to your class reunion in a city with known or suspected cases.
4. Wash your hands a lot, or use hand sanitizer. If someone who has swine flu coughs into his hand just before he touches a doorknob and then you touch it, your chances of getting the disease are pretty good.
5. If you develop flu-like symptoms, get to the doctor soon, just in case. Practice "social isolation": That is, as much as possible stay away from other people you might infect. (At the College of Medicine, that particularly applies to students and faculty who are seeing patients; you don't want to infect them.) If you have the flu, prepare to stay at home for at least seven days. To minimize the risk to others in your household, try to quarantine yourself in one room and have your own bathroom and personal supplies.
6. Be glad that preparations for a possible flu pandemic have been in the works, mostly as a result of concerns over bird flu. "This new strain of swine flu is going to test our pan-influenza preparedness plan," Brooks said. But "we're a lot better prepared than we were a few years ago because of the bird-flu planning."
7. Get good, reliable information. One excellent source Brooks recommends is <http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu>. Bookmark it.