



Use your sleeve

Written by Joel E. Mast

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Swine flu etiquette would not fly in genteel company, but it is absolutely critical to stem the spread of the potentially deadly virus, according to Logan County Health Commissioner Dr. Boyd Hoddinott, D.O.

"We have to do our best not to get it," he said Tuesday during a gathering of about 100 emergency responders, government officials and educators at Ohio Hi-Point Career Center. "And if we do get it, do our best not to pass it on."

Instilled since childhood, most in society know to cover their mouths and nose with their hands when they cough or sneeze.

The problem is the influenza virus can survive on the skin and get passed on to others.

So, the new etiquette calls for a person to use a tissue or a sleeve of a garment to cover the mouth and nose.

A video produced by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention shows actors burying their faces into the crook of their elbow to catch a sneeze or cough. Viruses are trapped in the fabric and die, according to the video.

"It (the video) is a little bit silly," said Helen Norris, director of the Logan County Emergency Management Agency, "but the message is important."

Dr. Hoddinott said there are 67 cases in the nation and most originated in people who recently visited Mexico. He does not want people to panic as the country has time to react and the end of the typical influenza season is near.

He wants community leaders and health care professionals to spread the word on how to avoid the new strain which is a mix of American and Asian swine flu and bird flu.

Dr. Hoddinott said the medical community is working to develop a vaccine for the new strain and there should be plenty by fall. It also is encouraging that the severe cases can be treated with currently available medications, he said.

The doctor said people need to wash their hands regularly, avoid close contact with others in social settings and stay home from work and school if they catch the virus.

On the Web

www.cdc.gov

www.odh.ohio.gov and

www.loganhealth.org

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Swine flu symptoms

- Fever more than 100 degrees Fahrenheit
- Sore throat
- Cough
- Stuffy nose
- Chills
- Headache and body aches
- Fatigue
- Some people have reported diarrhea and vomiting

Source: *Logan County Health District*

How to avoid catching or spreading influenza

- Avoid contact with ill people and keep extra distance in social settings.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue or sleeve to contain germs spread by a cough or sneeze. Throw used tissues away.
- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water or alcohol-based hand gel.
- Stay home if you contract the virus and seek medical attention only for severe cases such as trouble breathing. Do not go to school, work or travel while ill.

Source: *Logan County Health District*