

HUMAN VIRUSES AND EPIDEMICS DISASTER RESPONSE

Background:

Infectious diseases, also referred to as communicable diseases, contagious diseases or transmissible diseases which, are caused by viruses may lead to outbreaks and epidemics that can cause overcrowded hospitals, a high number of deaths, illnesses, and a break in the everyday services we are accustomed to. Viruses are spread through physical contact, contaminated food, body fluids, objects, airborne inhalation, or through vector organisms such as mosquitoes. Infectious diseases that are especially infective are sometimes called contagious and can be easily transmitted by contact with an ill person or their secretions. Viruses can be spread throughout a small region (epidemic) or it can be a wide-spread outbreak (pandemic).

Prevent the Spread of Infectious Diseases:

- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water or use an alcohol-based (60-95%) hand sanitizer.
- Cover coughs and sneezes with tissues.
- Stay away from others as much as possible if they are sick.
- Stay home from work and school if you are sick.

Preparing for Long Term Impact of Infectious Diseases:

- Have any nonprescription drugs and other health supplies on hand, including pain relievers, stomach remedies, cough and cold medicines and vitamins.
- Transportation services may be disrupted or unavailable. Plan to take fewer trips and store essential supplies.
- Store a two weeks supply of non-perishable food and fresh water for emergencies.
- Discuss telecommuting possibilities with your employer.
- Plan for possible loss of income if you are unable to work or the company you work for temporarily closes.
- Be prepared for schools to close in order to limit the spread of the disease and to help prevent others from becoming sick.
- Plan home learning activities and exercises that your children can do at home. Have learning materials, such as books, school supplies and educational computer activities and movies on hand.
- Stay tuned to the radio or television for updates and recommendations.

