

August 24, 2009

To: UT Knoxville Faculty and Staff
From: Susan Martin, Provost and Senior Vice Chancellor
Subject: Flu Prevention and Preparation

Dear Colleagues,

Welcome back to your teaching duties and other job responsibilities for the 2009-2010 academic year. This may be an unusual year as we confront the H1N1 flu (commonly referred to as "swine flu"), which is expected to affect our faculty, staff and students this fall. I am writing to request that you prepare yourselves in three ways to ensure the continuity and success of our academic, research and service missions.

First, familiarize yourself with information about the H1N1 flu. Keep abreast of information about preventive measures and vaccines, and encourage students to be informed. UT will regularly update information about the H1N1 flu at <http://safety.utk.edu/> and at the Student Health Service Web site at <http://studenthealth.utk.edu>.

Second, learn more about the major strategies for limiting the spread of

H1N1 and all "Influenza Like Illnesses" (ILI). Typical symptoms are fever, cough and sore throat, and the H1N1 flu virus is particularly contagious. Key prevention measures include:

- * Wash your hands often with soap and warm water, especially before eating and after you cough or sneeze. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand gel.
- * Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it. If a tissue is not available, cough into your shirt sleeve.
- * Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread that way.
- * Do not share your food, drink or utensils with others.
- * Avoid close contact with sick people. Onset of symptoms can take up to three days after you've been exposed to the virus.
- * If you become sick, stay home and avoid contact with others until you've been symptom-free for 24 hours. A mild, lingering cough may occur and, barring any other flu symptoms, this shouldn't prevent resumption of normal activities.
- * Get vaccinated. Students, faculty and staff can get the seasonal flu vaccination on Sept. 16, 2009, from 11 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. in the University Center Ballroom. Cost is \$20. The H1N1 vaccine (series of two shots, several weeks apart) will be offered to the campus community at no cost when it becomes available.

Third, plan for strategies to ensure continuity in the academic mission if there are an increased number of absences among faculty, staff and students this fall:

- * Develop contingency plans for dealing with student absences because of flu, both during the semester and final examinations. Avoid policies that encourage infected individuals to come to class or examinations.
- * Do not compromise academic standards; do think about alternatives for effectively accomplishing your course goals under unpredictable circumstances.
- * Be attentive to your own health and encourage departmental planning to deal with possible illness among faculty and GTAs.

We are fortunate that, to date, the H1N1 strain has been milder than initially expected. By planning to deal with the spread of H1N1, we hope to minimize disruptions. Thank you for taking appropriate measures to address this possibility as you plan for the semester. Best wishes for a successful start to the new academic year.

Best regards,

Susan D. Martin

Provost and Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs