

The Home Extension Line

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Tips for Containing Spread of Swine Flu

The Atlanta-based federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the New York City Department of Health are recommending several steps to prevent the spread of the virus.

- **Stay home when you are sick.** If you have flu symptoms, stay home from work or school to avoid spreading the disease. Do not return until two days after your symptoms are gone.
- **Avoid close contact.** Avoid close contact with people who are sick. When you are sick, keep your distance from others to protect them from getting sick too.
- **Cover your nose and mouth.** Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. It may prevent those around you from getting sick.
- **Clean your hands.** Washing your hands often will help protect you from germs.
- **Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.** Germs are often spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose, or mouth.
- **Go to the hospital if you have severe symptoms** such as difficulty breathing, but if your symptoms are mild stay home to avoid spreading the virus to others at the hospital.
- **Practice other good health habits.** Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids, and eat nutritious food.

For more information please visit the CDC's web site at:
<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/swine/index.htm>

Travel: Green on the Go

You may not always be able to find a LEED-certified hotel during your travels, but here are a few ways you can be a more responsible guest, no matter where you lay your head.

- **FLIP THE SWITCH:** Save energy by turning off the air conditioning/heat, lights, and TV when you leave.
- **SUMMER SHADE:** Close your curtains in summer to keep out the heat of the sun; open them in winter to allow warmth into your room.
- **HITCH A RIDE:** Use public transportation or the hotel's shuttle service whenever possible.
- **PASS IT ON:** If complimentary newspapers are provided, place them in the lobby or lounge for others to read when you're done.
- **LATHER, RINSE, RECYCLE:** Carry your own soap and shampoo in refillable bottles. Leave any unopened hotel toiletries behind to help reduce packaging waste.
- **FRIDAY NIGHT LIGHTS:** Pack a night-light to use in lieu of leaving the bathroom light on – it's more energy efficient.

Source: Southern Living, October 2008

Journaling on Food & Mood

For a full picture of your eating habits, include your mood — whether sad, happy, stressed or depressed — in your food journal. The resulting entries can help you determine how mood and emotions play into your food choices. You may find that you buy a big bag of potato chips every time you feel down. Or that stress sends you sprinting for the candy dish.

If you feel stressed, for instance, you may crave — and, let's face it, gorge on — carbohydrates. This may be because they boost serotonin, a brain chemical that has a calming effect. Or it may be that you have learned over time to use foods as a temporary stress reliever. Once you've identified your patterns, you can begin to change them.

The goal, of course, is to find positive ways to manage your moods and emotions. If you find you're handling your emotional highs and lows with food, take this opportunity to find healthy alternatives. Manage your stress by talking or exercising with a friend, for instance, or counter your boredom with a quick glance at your to-do list.

Source: Mayo Clinic, April 2009

Hurricane Preparation

Should I Stay or Should I Go:

Unless you live in a coastal or low-lying area, an area that floods frequently, or in manufactured housing, emergency managers may not ask you to evacuate. If you stay, it's important to **HAVE A PLAN** that keeps you safe in your home. Decide now "Should I Stay or Should I Go."

Before a Hurricane

- Make a personal hurricane plan
 - Review and rehearse the plan with the entire family
- Know your evacuation zone
- If someone has special needs and needs assistance, contact Emergency Management to get them registered before the hurricane
- Fill bathtub with water for hygiene purposes
- Fill containers with water (one-gallon per person and pet per day)
- Fill vehicle gas tanks
- Get cash (ATMs may be unavailable).

Items you need to have and what you need to do regardless of your decision to stay or go

- Have a disaster supply kit
- Inspect your home to determine how well it will withstand major hurricane winds
 - This may require hiring a building engineer or contractor to inspect your home
- Maintain the outside of your home
 - Repair loose fixtures
 - Trim dead branches from trees
 - Store and secure loose lawn items and furniture
- If you don't have pre-installed shutters, measure all windows for plywood covers
 - Pre-cut the plywood and install anchors
 - Reinforce all entryways and garage door
- Review all insurance policies to ensure they are up-to-date and provide adequate coverage
- Learn the storm surge history and flood potential of your area
- Take a written inventory of belongings
 - Videotape or take pictures of the inside and outside of your home
- Ensure your pets have tags with address and phone number
 - Have current photos of pets and have current vaccination papers and at least a two week supply of special medication for your pets in your hurricane kit.

During the Hurricane if you plan to stay

- Stay inside at all times.
 - Wind and rain can temporarily calm down if the eye of the hurricane passes right over you. But, it will pick up again.
- Stay away from windows and doors
- Listen to local media for continuous coverage of the storm
- Have a set of “rabbit ears” or other small antenna on hand if cable or satellite is interrupted
 - If power is lost, tune your radio to your local hurricane information
 - Listen to NOAA Weather Radio for additional severe weather or emergency information.

If you plan to evacuate

- Determine in advance where you will go
 - How you will get there
 - Where you will stay
- Have a backup plan
- Take your hurricane survival kit with you
- If you plan to evacuate to a public shelter, familiarize yourself with local public shelters and what to do with your pets.

After the Hurricane

- Listen to local radio stations and your NOAA Weather Radio for emergency information
- Do not use public water for cooking or drinking until you are notified it is safe
- Only use telephone for emergency
- Carefully survey any damage
- Stay away from downed power lines
- Keep children from playing in standing water and make sure they are wearing shoes
- Videotape or photograph your home prior to making any temporary repairs to prevent further damage
 - Document any repairs made and keep all receipts for every transaction
- Clearly make the street address on your home so insurance adjusters and repair crews can identify your location
- Contact your insurance agent
- If you have evacuated, do not attempt to return home until local officials have announced it is safe.

Source: Sarasota County Government, Sarasota, FL

Cholesterol: When High is Good

When it comes to cholesterol, most people think lower is better. But it isn't so simple. While all the cholesterol you eat is the same, cholesterol in the blood travels in different types of packages. The two basic kinds are LDL (low-density lipoprotein, the "bad" type), which promotes atherosclerosis, and HDL (high-density lipoprotein, the "good" type), which helps protect against this. So while you want to keep your LDL and total cholesterol low, you want to keep your HDL high.

HDL is turning out to be even more cardio-protective than previously thought. Not only does it help remove cholesterol from artery walls, but recent research indicates that it also acts as an antioxidant, reduces inflammation and blood clotting, and helps blood vessels to dilate and stay flexible. Low HDL is a part of the metabolic syndrome, a cluster of conditions that greatly increases the risk of heart disease, stroke, and Type 2 diabetes.

It's estimated that for every 1 mg/dl increase in HDL, the risk of cardiovascular disease drops by 2 to 3%. Low HDL is now considered as important an indicator of cardiovascular risk as high LDL. In fact, if you're over 70, HDL may be an even stronger indicator than LDL, according to a study in 2005. Women tend to have higher HDL than men, since estrogen raises it. Low HDL for women is thus defined as less than 50mg/dl, while for men it is less and 40mg/dl. HDL over 60 mg/dl is considered protective, even though it adds to your total cholesterol reading.

What you can do to help lower your cholesterol count:

- **Lose weight if you're overweight.** Losing weight by exercising and cutting calories is more likely to help than losing it only by dieting. This is especially important if you carry most of your excess weight in your abdomen (that is, your body is apple-shaped). For every 10 pounds of weight lost, HDL rises 2 mg/dl, on average, according to one analysis.
- **Don't smoke.** Smoking lowers HDL by an average of 5 mg/dl. Even secondhand smoke lowers it.
- **Consider a drink a day.** Alcohol can raise HDL, especially the larger, more beneficial particles. But keep your intake moderate: no more than one drink a day for a woman, two drinks for a man. Alcohol has health risks, so most people shouldn't start drinking for the potential cardiovascular benefits.
- **Limit your intake of starchy or sugary foods, as well as trans fat.** Instead, eat more high-fiber foods and healthy fats, such as omega-3s (in fish) and monounsaturated (as in nuts and olive or canola oil), along the lines of a Mediterranean diet.
- **Avoid dietary supplements that claim to raise HDL.** While some studies suggest that arginine, red rice yeast, garlic and policosonal, for instance, can raise HDL levels, the evidence is mixed and any effect is likely to be small.

Source: UC Berkeley Wellness letter

Help Your Picky Eater

Plan Healthy Meals for Your Child

- Serve different foods from each of the groups in the Food Guide Pyramid.
- Offer child size servings of food.
- Offer healthy snacks between meals at times that don't interfere with meals.
- Your child may want the same foods day after day. This is common behavior for young children. Continue to offer a variety of foods. Talk to your nutritionist if this lasts longer than two weeks.

Make Foods Look and Taste Good

- Serve different colored foods at each meal.
- Offer different textures of food – soft, crunchy, crisp, smooth.
- Give very hot foods a chance to cool.
- Offer plain foods instead of mixed foods like casseroles because your child may prefer the plain foods.
- Offer raw fruits and vegetables. Your child may prefer these to cooked.

Get Set for Mealtime

- Set regular meal and snack times. Children like and look forward to daily routines.
- Turn the television and computer off at meals. These are distractions for your child.
- Provide a set place for meals and expect your child to sit with the family during meals.
- Let your child help in the kitchen. Children are more willing to try food they helped prepare.
- Mealtime should be a relaxing time for your child and the family. Provide enough time for the meal so that your child is not rushed through the meal.
- Do not force your child to eat.

Source: Tennessee Department of Health

Cutting Costs to Live Within Your Income

Developing self-control of your spending is a basic step in cutting the cost of living. Some families instinctively seem to know how to get what they want, even on a limited income. But others need help in managing their finances to get what they need and want. Research shows that people worry more about money than any other family problem. If families communicate and everyone understands what the financial situation is, there will be greater cooperation.

Planned Spending

You and your family need to set goals and establish a plan for earning, saving, and spending money. Lack of planning may lead to serious difficulties. Planned spending is the first step for solving family money problems. Design your spending plan to suit your particular circumstances and your goals.

Here are the steps in making a personalized money plan:

1. Estimate your monthly take-home pay.
2. Write down an estimate of your basic expenses using your previous experience. Do not forget to include those expenses that occur quarterly or semi-annually, such as your insurance. If you are unable to recall the amounts, keep records of expenditures for two or three months. Your expenditures should reflect your goals. Almost every expense can be reduced. The main purpose of the spending plan is to give you direction in achieving your financial goals.
3. Test your spending plan. A simple spending record shows where your money actually goes. The trial test will show whether the plan is realistic. A good spending record will also locate money leaks, or spending that you never really intended.

Tips for Reducing Spending

You probably know of specific things you could do to reduce spending. The following suggestions may work for you.

1. Categorize your expenses as *wants* and *needs*. *Needs* include housing, basic utilities, childcare. *Wants* could include going out to eat, high fashion, newest electronics, etc. *Wants* we can space out over time.
2. Do not let your impulse determine major purchases. Postpone unplanned purchases 24 hours so you can rethink your plan.
3. Avoid shopping when you are down, depressed, tired, or hungry. If you have children, try to shop without them to reduce any sense of being rushed; feeling rushed may lead to impulse purchases.
4. Before purchasing an item, ask yourself, "Why?"

5. Reduce the number of trips you make to the stores. Wait until there are things you need.
6. Try to plan purchases around seasonal sales throughout the year.
7. Pre-shop to stop spending leaks. Decide what you want and why you want it before you go shopping. Make it a habit to compare prices and values.
8. If at all possible, try out or try on the item before you buy it. This practice will provide you with the opportunity to determine if the item will meet your needs.
9. Compare the cost per unit of items available in different sizes. It is not always cheaper to buy in bulk.
10. Save on food by planning meals with abundant seasonal items and supermarket specials. Take a carefully prepared list to the grocery store and stick closely to it. Utilize point-of-sale information for comparing product quality and price.
11. Save on clothes by planning your wardrobe. Check for fit, and buy only clothes that fit comfortably. Coordinate your clothing and accessory items. Examine care labels for fiber content and cleaning instructions. By taking proper care of your clothes, you will make them last longer and save money on replacements.
12. Save on transportation by selecting an automobile that adequately meets your needs, but does so without extremely high costs. A fuel-efficient automobile will yield substantial savings over time. Planning trips in logical sequences instead of doubling back to places you have already been also saves fuel.
13. If you have debts, accelerate repayment. There is little reason to retain savings that earn 3 percent interest while you still owe installment debts and loans that carry true interest rates of 12 to 22 percent.
14. For your banking services, select an institution with the lowest service charges on your accounts. Some banks do not charge anything as long as you keep your checking account above a certain minimum amount.
15. Buy property insurance at a reasonable cost. In general, you save by combining several types of coverage in one policy. A homeowner's package policy costs less than separate fire, theft, and liability insurance policies.
16. When buying insurance, avoid buying on a weekly or installment basis. This costs you much more than payments made every six months or annually.
17. House repairs can be costly. Get competitive bids from reputable firms before the work is started.
18. Take steps to conserve heat, cool air, and hot water. Use weather stripping, caulking, and insulation to reduce utility bills.

Additional tips can be found in the Managing in Tough Times publication from UF/IFAS Extension. It is available free at:

http://solutionsforyourlife.ufl.edu/families_and_consumers/money_matters/managing_in_tough_times.html

Source: University of Florida/IFAS, Department of Family, Youth and Community Sciences, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Gainesville, FL

Facts about Vitamin D

Why do we need vitamin D?

Vitamin D is needed for normal absorption of calcium and phosphorus. It helps put these minerals into bones and teeth. This makes bones stronger and reduces your risk for brittle bones.

What happens if we don't get enough vitamin D?

Lack of vitamin D affects bones and many other parts of the body. Growing children who do not get enough vitamin D have bones that can't support their weight (rickets). Adults deficient in vitamin D can develop soft bones (osteomalacia). They also can lose bone mass, which leads to brittle bones (osteoporosis). Vitamin D also helps the immune system as it fights off infection and helps keep us healthy. Without enough vitamin D, we are more likely to get certain diseases.

How much vitamin D do we need?

New research is finding that for good health we should have more vitamin D in our bodies than we used to think was needed. Higher levels of vitamin D can protect against disease and bone loss. Older adults and persons with dark skin are at higher risk than others for having low levels of vitamin D in their bodies.

How can we get enough vitamin D?

We get vitamin D from three sources — sunlight, food and supplements.

Sunlight: When exposed to sunlight, the skin makes a compound that is converted to vitamin D in the liver and kidneys. We need 10-15 minutes of direct sun on our face and arms, without sunscreen two to three times a week to make enough vitamin D. People in the northern U.S. need longer time in the sun than those in the south, especially in the winter when the sun is lower in the sky. Several factors affect how well the body makes vitamin D after the skin is exposed to sunlight. The following people may be at risk for vitamin D deficiency:

- Older people.
- People with dark skin.
- People with kidney or liver disease.
- People who do not get enough direct sun exposure.

Food: Eggs, sardines, and salmon contain vitamin D. Most fluid milk and some brands of yogurt are fortified with vitamin D. Fortified breakfast cereals, breads, and orange juice also may contain this vitamin. It is hard to get enough vitamin D from food.

Supplements: if you can't get enough vitamin D from your diet, and you don't get out in the sun much, a supplement can help. It is recommended that older adults and persons with dark skin get extra vitamin D from fortified foods or supplements.

How much is too much?

Vitamin D toxicity can cause nausea, mood changes, and organ damage. The current recommendation is to not get more than 50 mcg (2000 IU) of vitamin D each day from food and supplements. Check with your doctor for specific advice.

Source: University of Florida / IFAS, Department of Family, Youth and Community Sciences, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Gainesville, FL

Egg-Cellent Tips for Safe Eggs

Whether you're hopping down the bunny trail or cruising down the supermarket aisle, remember these guidelines from the American Dietetic Association to help ensure your Easter baskets and shopping baskets are full of only safe eggs.

Shopping

Inspect your eggs.

Before you buy eggs, open the carton and make sure none of them are cracked.

Separate eggs from raw meat.

Starting in your grocery cart, keep eggs and other foods separate from raw meat, fish, seafood and poultry. In your refrigerator, store eggs in cartons and keep them away from meat and poultry that might drip juice.

Preparation

Wash your hands.

Before any steps in preparing Easter eggs — cooking, cooling, dyeing and hiding — wash hands thoroughly in warm, soapy water.

Cook to completion.

To hard-boil eggs properly, bring a pot of cold water and eggs to a rapid boil, then remove from heat. Let eggs stand in water for 15 minutes. Eggs are ready when white and yolk are completely set.

Storage

Store properly.

Store Easter eggs in the refrigerator. Like other high-protein foods, eggs shouldn't sit out at temperatures of 40 degrees Fahrenheit or higher for longer than two hours.

Decorating

Decorate carefully.

After washing your hands, handle eggs carefully while decorating to avoid damage. Cracked eggs invite bacteria. If you plan to eat your creations, decorate the eggs and refrigerate them promptly.

Hid and Seek

Hide strategically.

If an Easter egg hunt is in your plans, hide eggs so they stay clear of pets, dirt and other sources of bacteria. Don't hide eggs more than an hour in advance of the hunt if you plan to eat them. Throw away eggs that are cracked, dirty or have been unrefrigerated for more than two hours. Tip: To be extra cautious, cook two sets of eggs: one for hiding and another for eating.

Discard eggs after a week.

Store eggs on a shelf inside the refrigerator, not on the door. Hard-boiled eggs — in the shell or peeled — do not keep as well as raw eggs, so discard any leftover Easter eggs after one week.

Source: American Dietetic Association

Florida Food Fare

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Figs

Description: A native of western Asia and the Mediterranean area, the fig is one of the earliest fruits known to man. It is estimated that they have been around for at least 6,000 years. The fig, a member of the mulberry family, is one of the sweetest fruits when fully ripe.

Availability: Fresh figs are available from June through October. They do not ship well so local fruit will most likely be found in the markets. Figs are sold dried and candied in the supermarket, particularly around the holidays.

Nutritional Value: Figs are high in dietary fiber and are a rich source of magnesium and potassium. They are also relatively high in vitamins A, B, and C and low in calories, about 50 calories each.

Selection and Care: Fresh figs must be fully ripe to be of good quality. Green ones will shrivel when cooked. Ripeness or maturity cannot be judged by size. A ripe fig is rather soft and varies in color according to variety. Pick just as the skin begins to break. Be careful not to bruise the fruit, as this will make it spoil very quickly. Avoid overripe figs detectable by their sour odor, a sign of fermentation. Fresh figs are highly perishable. Try to pick the fruit daily and either use or preserve it the same day for best quality and flavor. If you must store figs overnight, place in a single layer in a shallow container in the coldest part of the refrigerator. For longer storage, fresh figs may be frozen for up to 6 months. They can also be dried, candied or canned in syrup.

Preparation and Use: To use figs, remove the stem ends and halve, chop or slice, according to your recipe. Because their skins are edible, figs do not require peeling. Figs are a favorite breakfast fruit, and make a delightfully sweet addition to appetizers, salads or desserts. For variety, add chopped figs to your favorite bread or rice-stuffing recipe. Because figs are high in pectin, they are ideal for jams and preserves.

Recipe:

Stuffed Figs Appetizer

| | |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|
| 4 ounces Neufchatel cheese | 1/4 teaspoon paprika |
| Skim or lowfat milk to moisten | 12 large figs |
| 1/3 cup nuts, chopped | Lettuce |
| 1/3 cup celery, chopped | |

Soften cheese with milk to make a paste. Add nuts, celery and paprika. Mix. Remove stems from figs. Cut in half lengthwise. Scoop out some of inside and fill cavity with cheese mixture. Arrange 3 stuffed figs on lettuce and serve cold as an appetizer or salad. Yield 4 servings.