

and others. The stress caused by the social distancing, quarantine or isolation required during such an outbreak can be mitigated by knowing what to expect and how to support yourself. In preparation to any possible outbreak, you should:

- ▶ understand the risk with facts from a reliable source;
- ▶ be your own advocate and speak out about your needs;
- ▶ work with your employer to reduce financial stress;
- ▶ connect with others to reduce anxiety, loneliness and boredom; and
- ▶ use practical ways to cope and relax.

During an outbreak, you may experience mixed emotions, including a sense of relief. You may feel sadness or anger if, as a precaution, you are isolated from friends and loved ones during an outbreak. The best way of coping is to learn about the disease and the actual risk to others. Sharing this information will often calm fears in others and allow you to reconnect with them.

The Louisiana Office of Behavioral Health has helpful information at www.dhh.louisiana.gov/index.cfm/page/204.



Keep Your Distance

There are many simple steps that you can take to protect yourself from infectious diseases. Protecting yourself is essential to keeping you and those around you healthy.



*Clean your hands often.
Cover your coughs and sneezes.
Stay home when you are sick.*

Stay home from work if you are ill.

Social Distancing

Social distancing is a prevention method that reduces the spread of infectious diseases by limiting the proximity and frequency of contact between potentially infected individuals and others.

Infectious Diseases

Infectious diseases can be spread in different ways. The spray of droplets during coughing and sneezing is an example of how a disease can spread directly. You can even infect another person through the droplets created when you speak. Droplets fall to the ground within a few feet, so this type of transmission requires people to be close to one another.



More often, transmission occurs indirectly, meaning that being at the same place at the same time with an infected person is not needed. For example, sometimes droplets from a cough or sneeze land on hands, doorknobs, toys, tables or other surfaces, where they can remain infectious for hours. Hands that come in contact with these surfaces can become contagious. When a person's infectious hand touches his or her nose, eyes or mouth, he or she may become sick. Influenza (the flu), strep throat, mumps and bacterial meningitis are common infections that can spread this way.

Airborne transmission is another way diseases can spread indirectly. Airborne transmission occurs when bacteria or viruses travel in the air on either dust particles or small droplets from when people sneeze, cough, laugh or exhale. In this way, infectious material can remain in the air for significant lengths of time and travel over considerable distances. With this type of airborne transmission, direct contact with someone who is infected is not necessary to become ill. Measles, tuberculosis and chickenpox are some of the common infections that can be spread through the air.

Prevention

- ▶ Methods for preventing the spread of infectious diseases include frequent hand washing, appropriate use of hand disinfection, the standing of at least 6 feet away from others who may be infected, regular immunizations and social distancing.
- ▶ Remember, many germs can live 12-48 hours once they have left the human body. To avoid getting sick during an outbreak, **WASH YOUR HANDS OFTEN**, especially after coming into contact with commonly touched objects, such as doorknobs or tables.



Steps For Social Distancing

An individual's immunity makes a difference in how disease affects the body, and contact with a patient or animal with an infectious disease does not guarantee that someone will become infected. However, the risk of infection increases as exposure becomes longer, more frequent or more severe. Social distancing, or taking steps to avoid contact with others, can therefore help stop the spread of infectious disease.

Social distancing measures recommended by public health officials include:

- ▶ canceling or postponing public gatherings, such as sporting events, concerts, parades and festivals;
- ▶ closing shopping community centers, malls and theaters; and
- ▶ temporarily closing mass transit systems or restricting their use to essential travel only.

What You Can Do AT HOME

- ▶ When ill, avoid contact with people as much as possible.
- ▶ Cover your coughs and sneezes with the pit of your elbow.
- ▶ Keep a distance of six feet from others whenever possible.
- ▶ Wash or disinfect your hands frequently.



What You Can Do ABOUT WORK

- ▶ Stay home from work if you are ill.
- ▶ Do not return to work until at least 24 hours after your last fever.
- ▶ Clean your hands and work surfaces, such as phones and keyboards, frequently.
- ▶ Use email, conference calls or video conferencing instead of face-to-face meetings whenever possible.
- ▶ Set up a contingency plan with your supervisor that includes telecommuting arrangements in case you become ill during an infectious disease outbreak.

What Public Health Officials May Do

- ▶ Ask people to stay home when sick and avoid others while infectious.
- ▶ Change business practices, such as flexible shift plans, to encourage working from home and cancel large meetings or conferences.
- ▶ Close schools and child care facilities.

Behavioral Health During Social Distancing

As everyone reacts differently to stressful situations, every individual should consider the effect that an infectious disease outbreak can have on both themselves