

## TRANSMISSION OF THE INFLUENZA VIRUS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE LITURGY

### **How is the influenza virus transmitted?**

Influenza viruses are spread when a person who has the flu coughs, sneezes, or speaks and spreads virus into the air, and other people inhale the virus. When these viruses enter the nose, throat, or lungs of a person, they begin to multiply, causing symptoms of the flu. The viruses can also be spread when a person touches a surface with flu viruses on it (for example, a door handle) and then touches his or her nose or mouth. A person who is sick with the flu can spread viruses. Adults may be contagious from one day before developing symptoms to up to seven days after getting sick. Children can be contagious for longer than seven days.

### **What are the two best ways to prevent the transmission of the influenza virus?**

- The single best way to prevent the flu is to get vaccinated with the yearly seasonal flu vaccine. All parishioners and most especially all ministers of Holy Communion should be encouraged to get vaccinated annually.
- As with other infectious illnesses, another important and appropriate preventive practice is careful and frequent hand hygiene. Cleaning your hands often using either soap and water or waterless alcohol-based hand sanitizers removes potentially infectious materials from your skin and helps prevent disease transmission.

### **Other ways to prevent the spread of germs and viruses:**

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- If possible, stay home from work, school, and errands when you are sick.
- When coughing or sneezing, use a tissue to cover your mouth, or direct it into your sleeve/elbow instead of your hand.
- Germs are often spread when a person touches something that is contaminated and then touches his or her eyes, nose, or mouth. Avoid touching yourself in those places, especially when illness is prevalent.

### **What should parishes do year-round to minimize the transmission of the flu virus during the liturgy?**

- Promote clean hands.
  - Parish and school washrooms should be well-equipped with soap dispensers and paper towels. Bottles of hand sanitizer should be made available where people need to use them.
  - Ministers of Holy Communion should wash their hands prior to their attendance at Mass and should be required to sanitize their hands before they assist with distribution of Holy Communion. This sanitizing should be able to be done in a way so as to draw as little attention to that fact as possible. (For instance, bottles of hand sanitizer should never be placed on the altar.)
- Make good use of the purificator when distributing of the Precious Blood.
  - Ministers of Holy Communion should be reminded to thoroughly wipe both the inner and outer surfaces of the chalice where the communicant's lips have come into contact with it when receiving the Precious Blood.

- Ministers should also turn the chalice slightly between communicants and try to use different portions of the purificator during the wiping process.
- Encourage people who think they may be beginning to feel ill to refrain from receiving the Precious Blood.
  - We receive the body and blood, soul and divinity of Christ in its totality under either species, together or alone. Receiving both species is a more complete *sign*, but not a more complete *reality*.
- Encourage people who are sick to stay home.
  - Though it is true that it is a grave matter to be absent from Mass on Sundays and holydays, this never applies to those who are ill, especially those who are contagious or display flu-like symptoms.

**In localities where there is a *significant* outbreak of influenza, what temporary liturgical modifications may be introduced in order to minimize its transmission during Mass?**

- Greeters may refrain from shaking the hands of people as they enter.
- The Sign of Peace may be shared without touching hands or kissing.
- If your local tradition includes it, all may refrain from holding hands during the Lord's Prayer.
- The distribution of Holy Communion to the assembly may be limited to the form of bread alone.
  - This would be contraindicated in any parish where celiac disease prevents individuals from receiving the host. Provisions for these individuals' reception of the Precious Blood must then always be made.

**It is important that the *temporary* nature of the liturgical modifications listed above be stressed, and that due diligence be afforded to returning to ordinary practices as soon as any true threat has passed.**

**Canonically, the reception of Holy Communion on the tongue is always a legitimate option for those who desire it.**

**What qualifies as a “significant outbreak” of influenza? How can we know when to put temporary liturgical modifications in place, or when to lift them?**

During times of concern, Pastors, Parish Life Coordinators and Parish Directors should maintain occasional contact with officers from their county health department regarding rates of infection in their area, and take this information into account when making decisions which affect the celebration of the liturgy. (This list is updated in mid-January each year.) All of the health officers listed below have been contacted by the Office of Worship and were asked to try to assist you in this way.

**Ashland County Health and Human Services Department**

630 Sanborn Avenue  
 Ashland, WI 54806  
 715/ 682-7924 (Fax)      715/ 682-7004 (Phone)  
 Ms Cyndi Zach [cyndi@hsd.co.ashland.wi.us](mailto:cyndi@hsd.co.ashland.wi.us)

**Barron County Health and Human Services Department**

335 E Monroe Avenue, Rm 338 Barron, WI 54812  
715/ 537-6274 (Fax) 715/ 537-5691 (Phone)  
Ms Kelli Engen [kelli.engen@co.barron.wi.us](mailto:kelli.engen@co.barron.wi.us)

**Bayfield County Health Department**

117 East 6th Street  
Washburn, WI 54891  
715/ 373-6307 (Fax) 715/ 373-6109 (Phone)  
Ms Terri Kramolis [tkramolis@bayfieldcounty.org](mailto:tkramolis@bayfieldcounty.org)

**Burnett County Department of Health & Human Services**

7410 County Road K #280  
Siren, WI 54872-9043  
715/ 349-2140 (Fax) 715/ 349-7600 x 1263 (Phone)  
Ms Michelle Bailey [mbailey@burnettcounty.org](mailto:m Bailey@burnettcounty.org)

**Douglas County, Department of Health & Human Services**

1316 North 14th Street, Suite 324  
Superior, WI 54880  
715/ 395-1434 (Fax) 715/ 395-1304 (Phone)  
Ms Katherine German-Olson [katherine.german-olson@douglascountywi.org](mailto:katherine.german-olson@douglascountywi.org)

**Iron County Health Department**

502 Copper Street  
Hurley, WI 54534  
715/ 561-2836 (Fax) 715/ 561-2191 (Phone)  
Ms Zona Wick [wickz@ironcountywi.org](mailto:wickz@ironcountywi.org)

**Lincoln County Health Department**

607 North Sales Street  
Merrill, WI 54452-1637  
715/ 536-2011 (Fax) 715/ 536-0307 (Phone)  
Ms Shelley Hersil [shersil@co.lincoln.wi.us](mailto:shersil@co.lincoln.wi.us)

**Oneida County Health Department**

100 W Keenan Street  
Rhineland, WI 54501  
715/ 369-6112 (Fax) 715/ 369-6105 (Phone)  
Ms Linda Conlon [lconlon@co.oneida.wi.us](mailto:lconlon@co.oneida.wi.us)

**Polk County Health Department**

100 Polk County Plaza, Suite 180  
Balsam Lake, WI 54810  
715/ 485-8501 (Fax) 715/ 485-8500 (Phone)  
Ms Gretchen Sampson [gretchens@co.polk.wi.us](mailto:gretchens@co.polk.wi.us)

**Price County Department of Health & Social Services**

104 South Eyder Avenue Phillips, WI 54555  
715/ 339-3057 (Fax) 715/ 339-3054 (Phone)  
Ms Michelle Edwards [michelle.edwards@co.price.wi.us](mailto:michelle.edwards@co.price.wi.us)

**Rusk County Department of Health & Human Services**

311 Miner Avenue East Suite C220  
Ladysmith, WI 54848  
715/ 532-2217 (Fax) 715/ 532-2299  
Ms Celina Cooper [ccooper@ruskcountywi.us](mailto:ccooper@ruskcountywi.us)

**Saint Croix County Department Health & Human Services**

1445 North Fourth Street  
New Richmond, WI 54017-6004  
715/ 246-8367 (Fax) 715/ 246-8372 (Phone)  
Ms Deborah Lindemann [deb.lindemann@co.saint-croix.wi.us](mailto:deb.lindemann@co.saint-croix.wi.us)

**Sawyer County Department of Health & Human Services**

10610 Main Street, Suite 224  
Hayward, WI 54843-0730  
715/ 634-5019 (Fax) 715/ 638-3438 (Phone)  
Ms Eileen Simak [esimak@sawyerhs.hayward.wi.us](mailto:esimak@sawyerhs.hayward.wi.us)

**Taylor County Health Department**

224 S Second St  
Medford, WI 54451  
715/ 748-1417 (Fax) 715/ 748-1410 (Phone)  
Ms Patty Krug [patty.krug@co.taylor.wi.us](mailto:patty.krug@co.taylor.wi.us)

**Vilas County Health Department**

302 W. Pine Street  
Eagle River, WI 54521  
715/ 479-3741 (Fax) 715/ 479-3656 (Phone)  
Ms Gina Egan [giegan@co.vilas.wi.us](mailto:giegan@co.vilas.wi.us)

**Washburn County Health Department & Human Services**

222 Oak Street  
Spooner, WI 54801  
715/ 635-4416 (Fax) 715/ 635-4400 (Phone)  
Ms Jerri Pederson [jpederso@co.washburn.wi.us](mailto:jpederso@co.washburn.wi.us)

Portions of this text have been taken from directives published by the USCCB's Secretariat for Divine Worship in consultation with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).