



## Plan for Pandemic Flu

*“Ready in 3” helps Missouri residents prepare for possible outbreak*

As we make the transition into fall, many people are beginning to think about seasonal flu, and getting their annual flu shot. However, there is another threat looming, one that many people either don't understand or ignore altogether.

Pandemic flu has become a hot topic in recent years, mostly due to concern about a type of bird flu virus known as H5N1. This strain of flu, which is not the same as pandemic flu, has infected hundreds of people. H5N1 kills about 50 percent of the people it infects, but fortunately the virus is not passed from human to human. However, disease experts are looking for signs that this virus, or another bird flu virus, could mutate into a new type of virus that could cause pandemic flu in humans.



of the United States, either people directly infected or those who will take care of the sick. A pandemic is likely to be prolonged and come in waves, requiring temporary changes in many areas of society such as schools, businesses, transportation, and public services. The social and economic impact would be enormous. Federal, state, and local governments, including St. Charles County, are taking steps to prepare for and respond to

an influenza pandemic.

There were three serious flu pandemics in the 20th Century that killed millions of people. Experts believe another pandemic will strike in the future. Because it's easier now for people to travel around the world, a new kind of flu virus would be quickly carried from country to country. There would be no flu shots available at first to help stop the spread of a new flu virus. Because the pandemic flu virus would be able to be passed easily from person to person, it would spread quickly over long distances to millions of people worldwide, resulting in a flu pandemic. It's estimated that a future flu pandemic could affect half the population

You should also learn about both the magnitude of what can happen in a pandemic and what actions you can take to lessen the impact on you and your family. To prepare Missouri residents, the Department of Health and Senior Services has developed a special “Ready in 3” Community Guide about pandemic flu. For your own copy of the free Community Guide, or other “Ready in 3” resources, visit [www.dhss.mo.gov](http://www.dhss.mo.gov) or stop by the health department building at 1650 Boone's Lick Road in St. Charles. To learn more about the threat of pandemic flu, log on to [www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov).

## From the Director



Gil Copley

The St. Charles County Department of Community Health and the Environment, Division of Public Health, recently sent out a press release to alert residents that shigellosis cases in daycare centers had increased in the last month. The news release, containing information about shigellosis, can be found [here](#). There is also detailed information available at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention disease page for shigellosis which can be found [here](#).

We had seen a gradual increase in cases of shigellosis in St. Charles County in the two months preceding the recent upswing. Over the last year, hundreds of cases of shigellosis have been reported in other parts of the St. Louis metro area. Until recently, however, no significant increase had been detected in St. Charles County, only sporadic cases.

To read the rest of this article, click on [From the Director](#)



# National Breast Cancer Awareness Month



October is National Breast Cancer Awareness Month. The program is dedicated to increasing knowledge about the importance of early detection of breast cancer. Since NB-CAM began in 1985, mammography rates have more than doubled for women age 50 and older and breast cancer deaths have declined.

This is exciting progress, but there are still women who do not take advantage of early detection at all and others who do not get screening mammograms and clinical breast exams at regular intervals.

- Women age 65 and older are less likely to get mammograms than younger women, even though breast cancer risk increases with age.
- Women below the poverty level are less likely than women at higher incomes to have had a mammogram within the past two years.

Experts say if all women age 40 and older took advantage of early detection methods – mammography plus clinical breast exam – breast cancer death rates would drop much further, up to 30 percent. The key to mammography screening is that it be done routinely – once is not enough.

For more information about National Breast Cancer Awareness Month, visit [www.nbcam.org](http://www.nbcam.org). Additional information is available from the American Cancer Society by calling 1-800-227-2345, the National Cancer Institute at 1-800-4-CANCER, or Y-ME National Breast Cancer Organization at 1-800-221-2141.



“Ready in 3” was the centerpiece of the St. Charles County health department’s display at the Preparedness Fair held September 22 at Lindenwood University. Organizers estimate 500 people attended the event.

## Celebrate a Drug-Free Lifestyle!

You can join millions of other people celebrating a drug-free lifestyle from October 20 to 28 with the Red Ribbon Campaign.

The campaign is the oldest and largest drug prevention program in the nation. It serves as an opportunity for our community to provide prevention education and promote a drug free lifestyle. According to a report from the U.S. Department of Education, “Tobacco use is associated with alcohol and illicit drug use and is generally the first drug used by young people who enter a sequence of drug use that can include tobacco, alcohol, marijuana, and harder drugs.”

The St. Charles County Department of Community Health and the Environment’s Health Education Division is working to address tobacco use in our community and offers a variety of tobacco prevention and cessation programs free of charge. For a list of classes, click the link to the [Public Health Division](#) on our homepage.

## Household Chemical Collection Ends Soon

After another successful season, St. Charles County Recycle Works will end household hazardous waste collection for the year on October 31.

How do you know what’s hazardous? Look for the words “WARNING” or “DANGER” on the label. Common household hazardous wastes include paint, varnish, oil, pesticides, and pool chemicals. The best option is to use up these products or check with neighbors to see if they need them. If these options don’t work, call Recycle Works Central at (636) 949-7900 extension 4271 to make an appointment.



If you are unable to make an appointment this fall, chemical collections will resume next spring. Look for the schedule in future editions of *Health-E-News*.

For more information on hazardous wastes accepted at Recycle Works, visit the Division of Environmental Services webpage at [www.scchealth.org/es](http://www.scchealth.org/es).

### Helpful Phone Numbers

Division of Public Health	WIC	636-949-7402
Health Education	Division of Environmental Services	636-949-7401
Vital Records	Recycling Services	636-949-7558
STD Prevention/Treatment	Division of Humane Services	636-949-7401
Environmental Public Health Program	Animal Control	636-949-1800
		636-949-7387
		636-949-7347

# Shigella Hits County Daycares

The St. Charles County Department of Community Health and the Environment is currently monitoring the spread of a bacterial infection known as shigellosis. About three dozen cases have been reported in daycares around the county in the last month. In addition, higher than normal numbers have been reported in surrounding counties in recent months. Since the disease spreads easily, the health department is taking steps to educate citizens and avert a wider outbreak in St. Charles County.

Shigellosis is caused by a group of bacteria known as Shigella. Symptoms of the disease include watery or bloody diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, abdominal cramping, fever, and headache. Infection usually resolves in five to seven days. The elderly, young children, or those with weakened immune systems are at greatest risk for a severe infection that may require hospitalization.

Shigella is transmitted by the bacterium passing from stools or soiled fingers from one person to the mouth of another

person. It can also be acquired by consuming contaminated food or water. Individuals infected with Shigella and their symptomatic contacts should be excluded from food handling, caring for children or patients, or any other activity that would cause the disease to spread. Young children diagnosed with shigellosis can return to daycare after they are off medication for at least 48 hours and have two consecutive negative stool cultures obtained at least 24 hours apart.

To prevent the spread of Shigella, follow these tips from the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).

- wash hands with soap and warm water frequently and thoroughly, especially after using the toilet, after changing diapers, and before preparing foods or beverages
- dispose of soiled diapers properly
- disinfect diaper changing areas after use
- keep children with diarrhea out of school or child care
- supervise hand washing by children after they use the toilet.

## Ground Beef Recall Goes Nationwide

The Topps Meat Company has expanded a recall of frozen ground beef products that could be contaminated with E. coli O157:H7. Up to 22 million pounds of meat are subject to the recall. More than a dozen people in eight states have now reported getting sick after eating Topps products.

E. coli O157:H7 is a potentially deadly bacterium that can cause bloody diarrhea and dehydration, as well as other symptoms. Young children, seniors, and people with weakened immune systems are at the most risk for the illness.

The ground beef products in question were distrib-

uted nationwide at Wal-Mart stores. The packages bear an establishment number of "EST 9748" inside the USDA inspection mark on the back panel. Consumers should also look for a "SELL BY" date or "BEST IF USED BY" date between September 25, 2007 and September 25, 2008.

Consumers should always take proper precautions when handling uncooked meat at home, including washing hands when handling raw meat products, using a separate cutting board to prepare meats, cooking ground meat to an internal temperature of 160 degrees Fahrenheit, and using a food thermometer to verify the temperature.

