



Charlie Crist
Governor

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PINELLAS COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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National Public Health Week April 2-8

What if there was no health department?

What does *your* health department do? If you ask most people, they would probably have a hard time answering that question. So, let's explore the question, **What if there was no health department?**

You get out of bed in the morning and notice several bumps on your skin where mosquitoes have bitten you during the night. You wonder if you may have contracted West Nile Virus. Some old tires in your neighbor's yard provide an ideal place for the mosquito that transmits the disease. Because there is no health department, there is no state health lab to check to see if you have contracted West Nile Virus from a mosquito bite.

Your wife is pregnant and needs assistance to make sure she and her unborn baby receive the nutritious diet they need. There is no health department to help your wife during her pregnancy through the WIC program, Healthy Start and other programs for moms and children.

Your two children are in the other room sick with measles or mumps. There was no health department to give immunizations to protect them against these diseases.

You decide to pick up a breakfast sandwich on your way to work and the sandwich makes you sick by mid-morning due to foodborne illness. There was no health department to train the food service workers on proper food preparation techniques and food hygiene.

Your co-worker is coughing his head off and occasionally spitting up blood because he has contracted TB and doesn't even know it. There is no health department to give TB tests or to treat and control the disease.

Several other co-workers have the flu. There is no health department to help you learn ways to protect yourself and your family from catching contagious diseases.

You get a phone call at work and you learn that a relative has contracted a sexually transmitted disease. There is no health department for counseling and treatment of the disease.

Later in the day, your wife calls to tell you that her sister has been diagnosed with diabetes. There is no health department to help her learn more about the disease and how to prepare meals that are right for a diabetic's unique needs.

Before going to bed, a news bulletin comes on TV informing you that a terrorist has released a biological weapon. The report indicated that it is probably smallpox. There is no health department to set up mass vaccination clinics to help prevent the spread of smallpox. Also, volunteers to staff the clinics have not been trained because there is no health department to oversee the training.

You finally decide to just go to bed and worry yourself to sleep because you haven't had a flu shot. You always got it at the health department, but now there is no health department.

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You lie awake hearing the drip of a water faucet that you know is bringing contaminated water from your well into your home. There is no health department to help keep the water supply safe. You toss and turn, and try to get some sleep anyway.

When you awake, you realize that all of this was only a dream. You call your local health department just to make sure.

The friendly voice on the phone answers, **“This is the Pinellas County Health Department, how can we help you?”** You breathe a sigh of relief. It *was* only a dream.

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The Mission of the Pinellas County Health Department is to promote, protect and improve the health and safety of our community through public and private partnerships in an environment that respects diversity.