



# PANDEMIC FLU

PUBLIC INFORMATION SERIES

## Family Preparedness Fact Sheet

The flu, also known as influenza, is a contagious respiratory disease caused by influenza viruses. In the United States, flu season begins every fall and ends every spring. The flu people get during this season is called seasonal flu. Sometimes, a new type of flu virus may emerge to which people have no resistance. When this happens, it can spread more easily from person to person around the world in a very short time, causing serious illness and death. This is pandemic flu.

The exact symptoms of pandemic flu are unknown. However, they are expected to be similar to those of seasonal flu, which are—

- fever
- sore throat
- cough
- runny or stuffy nose
- extreme tiredness
- headache
- muscle aches and pains
- stomach problems, such as nausea, vomiting and diarrhea (more common in children)

Contact a health care provider if you have any questions about specific symptoms. Visit [www.cdc.gov/flu/keyfacts.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/keyfacts.htm) for more detailed flu symptom information.

### **Pandemic Flu: the Disease**

Pandemic flu is more serious than seasonal flu. Most people who get seasonal flu recover within a week or two and do not require medical treatment. The very young, the very old and the very sick are most likely to become seriously ill from seasonal flu. Pandemic flu is different because more people who get it might not recover, even with medical treatment, and people of every age may be at risk of serious illness or death.

Unlike seasonal flu, there may not be a vaccine for pandemic flu until researchers and pharmaceutical companies are able to create one. Vaccine development depends on the scientific understanding of the specific virus causing the disease. If a vaccine is developed for pandemic flu, it will be a challenge to produce enough for everyone and dispense it to all the people that need it in a timely manner.

### **Flu Pandemic: the Event**

An influenza pandemic is a global outbreak of disease that occurs when a new influenza virus, to which people have little or no immunity, appears in the human population. It causes a serious illness that spreads easily from person to person worldwide.

Pandemics are different from seasonal outbreaks of influenza. Seasonal outbreaks are caused by subtypes of influenza viruses that are already in existence among people, whereas pandemic outbreaks are caused by new subtypes or by subtypes that have never circulated among people or that have not circulated among people in a long time. Scientists cannot accurately predict whether the avian flu (H<sub>5</sub>N<sub>1</sub>) virus will cause the next human pandemic or when the next pandemic will occur.

In the 20th century, flu pandemics occurred in 1918, 1957 and 1968. The 1918 pandemic led to high levels of illness, death, social disruption and economic loss. It is estimated it killed more than 20 million people worldwide.

### **Flu Pandemic: Preparedness**

During a flu pandemic, government officials may impose activity, movement or travel restrictions to prevent the flu virus from spreading. You may be asked to stay home for an extended period of time even if you are not sick. Schools, workplaces and public gatherings, such as sporting events or worship services, may close temporarily. Mass transportation—such as subways, buses, trains and air travel—may be limited. You and your family and friends may need to rely on each other.

Think about how you handle stress and know your strengths. Take steps to plan for, get through and recover from a flu pandemic.

- Store a two-week supply of food that does not require refrigeration, preparation or cooking. Ensure that formula for infants and any child's or older person's special nutritional needs are a part of your planning. Plan for your pets as well.
- Store a two-week supply of water, 1 gallon of water per person per day, in clean plastic containers. Avoid using containers that will decompose or break, such as milk cartons or glass bottles.

- Ask your health care provider and health insurance company if you can get an extra supply of your regular prescription drugs and medical supplies, such as glucose monitoring supplies.
- Store a supply of any nonprescription drugs, such as pain relievers, cough and cold medicines, stomach remedies and anti-diarrheal medication, as well as vitamins and fluids with electrolytes (such as sports drinks).
- Store health and cleaning supplies, such as bleach, tissues, a thermometer, disposable gloves, soap and alcohol-based hand sanitizers.
- Talk with family members and loved ones about how they would be cared for if they got sick.
- Ask your employer about plans to have staff stay home when they are sick or a family member is. Request details on any special considerations regarding sick leave, benefits and wages if staying home.
- Find out your employer's plans to keep the business functioning if key staff can't come to work.
- Ask your child's school or day care if they plan to encourage sick children to stay home during a flu pandemic or if they will close, requiring children to remain at home.

### **Pandemic Flu: Prevention**

There are some things that everyone can do to slow the spread of the flu and reduce its impact, whatever kind it is. Some of these actions are—

- Wash your hands with soap and water or clean them with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer often. Wash hands for at least 15 seconds.
  - For visibly soiled hands, first wash with soap and water.
  - When using soap and water, first wet hands with

water, apply an amount of product recommended by the manufacturer to hands, and rub hands together vigorously, covering all surfaces of the hands, giving attention to fingernails and surfaces where jewelry is worn. Rinse hands with water and dry thoroughly with a disposable towel. Use towel to turn off faucet.

- For hands that are not visibly soiled, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer (60% - 95% alcohol), or wash with soap and water or do both.
- When using an alcohol-based sanitizer, use directed amount of sanitizer, rub thoroughly over all surfaces of the hands, including nail areas and between the fingers. Rub until product dries.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze and clean your hands afterwards with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. If tissueless, cough or sneeze into your elbow or upper arm, not your hands.
- Keep your hands away from your eyes, nose and mouth to keep germs from entering your body.
- Stay home if you are feeling sick. Get plenty of rest and drink lots of fluids.
- Avoid close contact with sick people. Respiratory droplets passed from one person to another spreads flu.
- Avoid sharing objects—such as utensils, cups, bottles and telephones—or disinfect objects before using them.
- Keep your living and work areas clean.

Finding out the answers ahead of time will have a significant impact on your plans and decisions during a flu pandemic.

Contact your local Red Cross chapter for a pandemic flu family preparedness guide. Contact a health care provider if you have any questions. For more information, visit [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org), [www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov) and [www.who.int](http://www.who.int).



**American Red Cross**



## What is Pandemic Flu?

A “pandemic” is a disease that spreads all over the world and affects a large number of people. If you are caring for a loved one during a pandemic, it’s important to take steps to protect yourself and others. Always follow the most current advice of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and your local health department.

## Prevent the Spread of Pandemic Flu

These healthy habits will help keep you and others from getting and passing on the virus.

- > Clean your hands often with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- > Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze and clean your hands afterward. Put used tissues in a wastebasket.
- > Cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve if you don’t have a tissue.
- > Keep your hands away from your eyes, nose and mouth to prevent germs from entering your body.

Also, a person with signs of the flu should:

- > Stay home from work, school and errands and avoid contact with others.
- > Consider wearing a surgical mask when around others. There may be benefits.

## When a Household Member Is Sick

The flu virus is spread when contaminated droplets exit the mouth and nose of an infected person and the virus comes in contact with others. So, follow these tips to protect yourself and others in your home:

- > Keep everyone’s personal items separate. All household members should avoid sharing computers, pens, papers, clothes, towels, sheets, blankets, food or eating utensils.
- > Disinfect door knobs, switches, handles, toys and other surfaces that are commonly touched around the home or workplace.

### Disinfectant:

1 gallon water  
¼ cup bleach

Mix up a fresh batch every time you use it.

- > It is okay to wash everyone’s dishes and clothes together. Use detergent and very hot water. Wash your hands after handling dirty laundry.
- > Wear disposable gloves when in contact with or cleaning up body fluids.
- > One person should be the caregiver. He or she may benefit by wearing a mask when giving care.

## Practice Hand Hygiene

Caregivers should always wash their hands before providing care. Afterward, wash again and apply alcohol-based hand sanitizer as well. Follow these steps for proper hand hygiene:

1. Wet hands with warm, running water and apply liquid soap.
2. Rub hands vigorously for at least 15 seconds, covering all surfaces and fingers.
3. Scrub nails by rubbing them against the palms of your hands.
4. Rinse your hands with water.
5. Dry your hands thoroughly with a paper towel and use it to turn off the faucet. A shared towel will spread germs.

## Recognize Pandemic Flu Symptoms

Watch for these symptoms:

- > Fever
- > Cough
- > Runny nose
- > Muscle pain

Call your health-care professional at the first sign of the flu. Many symptoms can be treated by the health-care professional over the telephone.

## Care for a Loved One with the Flu

A person recovering from flu should have:

- > Rest and plenty of liquids
- > No alcohol or tobacco
- > Medications to relieve flu symptoms

In some cases, a health-care professional may prescribe antiviral drugs to treat the flu. Antibiotics (like penicillin) don’t cure it.

## Monitor Pandemic Flu Symptoms

Keep a care log. Write down the date, time, fever, symptoms, medicines given and dosage. Make a new entry at least every 4 hours or when the symptoms change. Call your healthcare professional again if your loved one has:

- > A high fever
  - Children and Adults:  
Greater than 105°F (40.5°C)
  - Babies 3- to 24-months-old:  
103°F (39.4°C) or higher.
  - Babies up to 3 months:  
Rectal temperature of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher.
- > Shaking chills
- > Coughing that produces thick mucus
- > Dehydration (feeling of dry mouth or excessive thirst)
- > Worsening of an existing serious medical condition (for example: heart or lung disease, diabetes, HIV, cancer)

If you cannot reach your health-care professional, **call 9-1-1** or local emergency number for any of the signs below:

- > Irritability and/or confusion
- > Difficult breathing or chest pain with each breath
- > Bluish skin
- > Stiff neck
- > Inability to move an arm or leg
- > First-time seizure

## Prevent Dehydration

Dehydration occurs when the body loses too much water and it's not replaced quickly enough. It can be serious. Begin giving soothing drinks at the first signs of the flu and follow these tips:

- > In addition to plenty of liquids, give ice and light, easily digested foods, such as soup and broth.

- > If your loved one has diarrhea or vomiting, give fluids that contain electrolytes. These are available at your pharmacy or grocery store. Or you can make your own rehydration electrolyte drink for someone over the age of 12.

### Electrolyte Drink:

1 quart water  
½ tsp. baking soda  
½ tsp. table salt  
3 to 4 tbsp. sugar  
¼ tsp. salt substitute  
Mix well and flavor with lemon juice or sugar-free Kool-Aid®.

- > If drinking liquids makes nausea worse, give one sip at a time until your loved one can drink again.

## Reduce Fever

To help reduce a fever, do the following:

- > Give plenty of fluids.
- > Give fever-reducing medication, such as acetaminophen, aspirin or ibuprofen, as directed on the container's label.  
Do not give aspirin to anyone younger than 20.
- > Keep a record of your loved one's temperature in your care log.
- > To relieve discomfort, give a sponge bath with lukewarm water.

After you have called your doctor or emergency number for a fever, continue to follow the home treatment recommendations above. If there is a delay in getting help, ask a health-care professional if you should start an additional dose of an alternate fever-reducing medication (acetaminophen, ibuprofen or aspirin) between the doses described on the label. Always continue to give plenty of fluids.

## Prepare for a Flu Pandemic

Make a plan now for a flu pandemic. Figure out what you will do if members of your household have to stay home from work or school or stay separated from others for a period of time. Keep extra supplies of food, water, medications and your disaster supply kit on hand.

### Pandemic Flu Caregiving Supplies:

- > Thermometer
- > Soap
- > Box of disposable gloves
- > Acetaminophen
- > Ibuprophen
- > Bleach
- > Alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- > Paper towels
- > Tissues
- > Surgical masks  
(one for each person)
- > Sugar, baking soda, salt,  
salt substitute

**For more information, contact your local American Red Cross chapter, visit [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org) or call 1-800-RED-CROSS.**

Many of the recommendations in this brochure are from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. This information is not intended as a substitute for professional medical care or current public health advice. Seek advice from your health-care provider, the CDC and your local health department. Visit [www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov).

As with all medications and treatments, there are side effects and potential complications. Seek professional advice from your health-care professional to make sure any medication or vaccination is appropriate to your health.



# Pandemic Flu Planning

## Checklist for Individuals & Families

You can prepare for an influenza pandemic now. You should know both the magnitude of what can happen during a pandemic outbreak and what actions you can take to help lessen the impact of an influenza pandemic on you and your family. This checklist will help you gather the information and resources you may need in case of a flu pandemic.

### ***1. To plan for a pandemic:***

---

- Store a two week supply of water and food. During a pandemic, if you cannot get to a store, or if stores are out of supplies, it will be important for you to have extra supplies on hand. This can be useful in other types of emergencies, such as power outages and disasters.
- Periodically check your regular prescription drugs to ensure a continuous supply in your home.
- Have nonprescription drugs and other health supplies on hand, including pain relievers, stomach remedies, cough and cold medicines, fluids with electrolytes, and vitamins.
- Talk with family members and loved ones about how they would be cared for if they got sick, or what will be needed to care for them in your home.
- Volunteer with local groups to prepare and assist with emergency response.
- Get involved in your community as it works to prepare for an influenza pandemic.

### ***2. To limit the spread of germs and prevent infection:***

---

- Teach your children to wash hands frequently with soap and water, and model the current behavior.
- Teach your children to cover coughs and sneezes with tissues, and be sure to model that behavior.
- Teach your children to stay away from others as much as possible if they are sick. Stay home from work and school if sick.



### 3. Items to have on hand for an extended stay at home:

Examples of food and non-perishables	Examples of medical, health, and emergency supplies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Ready-to-eat canned meats, fish, fruits, vegetables, beans, and soups</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Protein or fruit bars</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Dry cereal or granola</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Peanut butter or nuts</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Dried Fruit</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Crackers</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Canned juices</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Bottled water</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Canned or jarred baby food and formula</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Pet food</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Other nonperishable foods</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Prescribed medical supplies such as glucose and blood-pressure monitoring equipment</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Soap and water, or alcohol-based (60-95%) hand wash</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Medicines for fever, such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Thermometer</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Anti-diarrheal medication</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Vitamins</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Fluids with electrolytes</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Cleansing agent/soap</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Flashlight</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Batteries</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Portable radio</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Manual can opener</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Garbage bags</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Tissues, toilet paper, disposable diapers</li></ul>

**PandemicFlu.gov**



**AvianFlu.gov**



# PANDEMIC FLU

PUBLIC INFORMATION SERIES

## Preparing for a Flu Pandemic Fact Sheet

### Coping and Emotional Well-Being

*What is a pandemic? Who is at risk? What will happen?* As the media reports about the possibility of a flu pandemic, these thoughts may occur to you. Knowing what to expect, how to prepare and where to find needed information can increase your resilience and minimize the pandemic's impact on you and your loved ones.

#### What to Expect

A flu pandemic is a global outbreak of disease that occurs when a new influenza virus appears to which people have little or no immunity. It affects people of all ages, backgrounds and locations, causing much illness and death as well as social disruption. During a flu pandemic:

- Many people are likely to become ill at the same time.
- Infected people may be isolated, which means that they are separated from healthy people to reduce the chances of spreading the flu.
- People who have been exposed to the virus may be quarantined.
- Many things may shut down or be canceled, including public transportation, gathering places, events, schools and businesses.
- Community services and utilities may be disrupted.
- Health care services could become overwhelmed.

These circumstances could significantly impact you. You may need to reorganize your life to care for loved ones or to receive care. You may lose income if your workplace closes or you become ill. School closures can result in the need for home-schooling or other activities for homebound children. Access to food and other household goods may become limited. The many changes in day-to-day living can cause anxiety and stress.

#### Coping with Stress and Anxiety

Some ways that you can cope with stress and anxiety are—

- Get accurate information from reliable sources.
- Educate yourself about the flu pandemic.

- Maintain your normal daily routine, if you can.
- Exercise, eat well and rest.
- Stay active — physically and mentally.
- Stay in touch with family and friends.
- Find comfort in your spiritual and personal beliefs.
- Keep a sense of humor.

#### Coping Through Preparedness

Being adequately prepared can significantly affect how you cope with stress and anxiety during a flu pandemic. It will help you feel more in control and lower your stress. Consider adopting the following preparedness actions:

- Reduce the likelihood of infection by using good personal hygiene and self-care practices.
  - Wash your hands frequently with soap and water or an alcohol-based sanitizer.
  - Cough or sneeze into a tissue, and place used tissues directly into the trash.
  - If you do not have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your elbow or upper sleeve.
  - After coughing or sneezing, clean your hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
  - Stay at home if you are ill.
- Make a plan among your family and friends for taking care of one another should one of you become ill.
- Talk with your family and friends about how they will be cared for if they become ill.
- Keep at least a two-week supply of non-perishable easy-to-prepare foods, water and other critical household and hygiene goods.
- Keep medical supplies, prescription and non-prescription drugs on hand.
- Investigate how your health insurance carrier plans to handle costs of treatment during a pandemic.
- Check with your employer regarding policies for dealing with a pandemic.
- Ask about plans at your child's school or daycare for dealing with a pandemic, and develop plans now for how you would keep homebound children occupied.

## Increase Your Psychological Resilience

Certain strategies can increase your resilience and encourage new emotional strengths. The following tips can help you deal with life's difficulties, including a pandemic.

### *Identify how you cope with a crisis*

Identify your coping strengths. What crises have occurred in your life? How did they affect you? How did you cope? Did your coping style work? Are there other ways you might cope?

### *Foster healthy attitudes and beliefs*

Crises and difficult circumstances are stressful but can be overcome. Look for all ways unfortunate situations can be bettered and focus on problem solving.

### *Choose nurturing and healthy behaviors*

Identify your goals and move toward them, even though progress may seem slow at times. Take decisive action in protecting and preparing yourself and your loved ones, rather than letting the pandemic situation make your choices for you.

## Professional Help

Seek professional mental health care for yourself or your loved ones if you or they experience—

- Loss of sleep, frequent nightmares or disruptive and intrusive thoughts.
- Feelings of depression or feelings that lead to an inability to engage in usual activities.
- Disorientation, extreme memory difficulties; or losing awareness of time, date and place.
- Hallucinations or delusions, such as hearing or seeing things that are not there, extremely unrealistic thinking or excessive preoccupation with an idea or thought.
- A previously-identified mental health condition recurring or becoming worse.

If these circumstances occur, contact your personal physician or mental health provider. If you are currently working with a mental health provider, ask how services will be provided during a pandemic, and consider or discuss how you might get needed support or assistance from family and friends. You can also seek local mental health resources by contacting the U.S. National Mental Health Information Center at [www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/databases/](http://www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/databases/) or 1-800-789-2647.

## Stay Informed

- Be aware of the status of the pandemic in the media.
- Seek information on public services that may close, requiring you to plan ahead.
- Follow updates provided by local public health authorities and personal health care providers.

You can find additional information on planning and preparing for pandemic flu at [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org) and [www.pandemicflu.gov/](http://www.pandemicflu.gov/).

## Stay Connected

Stay in touch with others by telephone, e-mail and other means should you be unable to get around due to movement restriction measures.

Emergency Contact Card	
	<b>American Red Cross</b>
Name:	_____
Home Address:	_____ _____
<b>Important Phone Numbers</b>	
Local Health Department:	_____ _____
Local Red Cross Chapter:	_____ _____
Family Health Provider:	_____ _____
Mental Health Provider:	_____ _____

During a pandemic or other disaster, you can let others know of your well-being by registering on the Safe and Well Web site at <https://disastersafe.redcross.org/>.



**American Red Cross**