

Preparing You and Your Family for a Flu Pandemic

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A few definitions to help clarify...

- Seasonal flu (or influenza) is an upper respiratory illness
- Pandemic influenza is a flu that can have serious global implications
- “stomach flu” is actually not flu
 - Gastrointestinal illness
 - Food poisoning




Pandemic influenza is different from avian influenza

- Avian influenza primarily affects birds
- Most avian influenza viruses do not infect humans.
- An influenza pandemic happens when a new subtype emerges that has not circulated in humans
- H5N1



Influenza pandemics are recurring events.

- Influenza pandemics are rare but recurring
- Most recent pandemics: 1918, 1957, 1968
- 1918 pandemic killed an estimated 40 – 50 million people worldwide
- Pandemic happens when new influenza virus starts spreading by coughing and sneezing



The world may be on the brink of another pandemic.

- H5N1 strain is being monitored
- H5N1 was first detected in humans in 1997
- Up to this point, infections have occurred in people exposed to infected birds
- Most cases have occurred in children and young adults
- This strain does not jump easily from birds to humans or from human to human



All countries will be affected.

- Once a virus strain passes easily between people, global spread is inevitable
- Previous pandemic spread: 6 to 9 months
- Today: less than 3 months



Widespread illness will occur.

- Most people will have no immunity to the pandemic virus
- Few countries have resources needed to cope with large numbers of people who suddenly fall ill



Medical supplies will be inadequate or nonexistent.

- Not enough vaccine and/or antiviral drugs
- Many developing nations will have no access to vaccines for pandemic duration




Large numbers of deaths will occur.

- Number of deaths from pandemic flu in past has varied
- Factors that determine death rates:
 - # of people infected
 - Virulence of the virus
 - Characteristics of affected population
 - Effectiveness of preventive measures
 - Social isolation



Economic and social disruption

- High rates of illness and worker absenteeism are expected
- Social disruption greatest: impaired essential services such as power, transportation, communications



What kinds of disruptions can we expect with a flu pandemic?


○ Social disruptions

- Health care facilities
 - Elder care, nursing homes, outpatient facilities, care for those with disabilities
- Banks
- Stores
- Restaurants
- Government offices
- Post offices




○ Work disruptions


- Can you work from home?
- How will work in your department continue during a pandemic?
- What are essential services for this campus?
- Possible reduction or loss of income?
- Possible change in University mission?



- School disruptions
 - Does your child's school have a pandemic flu plan?
 - Plan for home learning activities and recreational needs
 - Consider childcare needs




- Transportation disruptions
 - Public Transportation
 - Fewer trips: how can you make fewer trips count more?
 - Care for loved ones who live far away?
 - Other ways to get to work?



Things to consider when planning your response to a flu pandemic...

- If you are exposed, have you made arrangements for your family?
- If your childcare facility is closed, where will your children be?
- Has your family discussed what to do and where to go if illness occurs?

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- Will you work or remain home?
 - Have you arranged for adequate resources for your family?
 - Do you have supplies in your home to monitor and treat anyone that may be sick?


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- Do you know when to seek medical help for someone sick and when to stay home?
 - Have you educated your family about ways to minimize exposure to germs?




What can you do to prepare?

- Prepare an emergency supply kit
 - Water
 - Food
 - Flashlight
 - First Aid Kit with reference guide
 - Medications
 - Radio
 - Tools

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- Kitchen accessories
 - Clothing
 - Personal items
 - Children's items
 - Sanitary supplies
 - Money
 - Contact information
 - Pet supplies

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- Prepare a family emergency health information sheet
 - Family Member Information
 - Emergency Contacts



What can you do to limit the spread of germs and prevent infection?

- Cover your coughs and sneezes
- Wash your hands with soap and water
- Stay home when you are sick
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth
- If possible, avoid close contact with others who are sick
- Get a yearly flu shot



Stay informed

- [Minnesota Department of Health](#)
- [Centers for Disease Control](#)
- [World Health Organization](#)