

What is a pandemic?

A “pandemic” is a serious disease that spreads around the world. Health experts tell us that the virus causing bird flu (also called avian influenza) could change, so that it spreads easily between people. If this happens it would start a pandemic, and many people would become sick. Flu spreads in areas where people interact like schools, businesses, transportation, and entertainment.



How is pandemic flu different from seasonal flu?

Seasonal flu comes every year but pandemics do not happen often. Pandemic flu initially looks a lot like seasonal flu (fever, cough, runny nose, and muscle pain) but may be much worse.

Because pandemic flu is caused by a completely new flu virus that no one has had before, nobody has natural defenses to fight it off. Even healthy people may get sick and can get severe complications, like pneumonia.

Health experts believe large numbers of people will get very ill and die in a pandemic, including people we rely on every day, such as teachers, policemen, and utility workers. Doctors and nurses will also get sick and would not be able to take care of their patients. This would have a big impact on normal life in our communities.

There are a few simple things you can do NOW to prepare:

- Start healthy habits now.
- Have an emergency plan.
- Build an emergency kit.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- During a pandemic, avoid large crowds.

Have a plan to:

- Arrange for child care if schools are closed or if you are sick.
- Ask your supervisor if you could telecommute or have a flexible schedule.
- List important phone numbers for family, friends, neighbors, doctor, and others. Know where to find the list.
- Volunteer with local groups to prepare for a flu pandemic.

Healthy Habits Stop the Spread of Disease:

Cover your cough

- Cover your coughs and sneezes with your arm, sleeve, or tissue.
- Teach your family to cover their cough. Put used tissues in the trash immediately.
- Try to stay at least three feet away from others who are coughing.



Wash your hands often

- Wash hands for 20 seconds with soap and warm water. Teach your children to sing Happy Birthday or the Alphabet song while they wash to make sure they wash long enough to get rid of most germs.
- Wash your hands after sneezing or coughing into a tissue.
- Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer to help kill germs, especially when you are on the go.
- Use disinfecting wipes to clean things that many people touch (like door knobs, toys, remote controls, phones, and switches) at work and at home, especially if someone in your house is sick.

Get your yearly flu shot

- The yearly flu shot or nasal spray flu vaccine can protect you from getting sick with seasonal flu viruses. A pandemic will require a special flu vaccine.
- People who are most at risk for problems from the flu need the flu vaccine each year including:
 - Children 6 months up to 5 years old
 - Adults over 50
 - People of all ages with chronic illnesses
 - Pregnant women
- Babies under 6 months old cannot get the flu shot. If you and your family get flu shots, you will decrease the chance that a baby can catch the flu from you.
- If vaccine supply is available, everyone else is encouraged to get a flu shot to stay healthy and prevent spreading flu to others in the community.



More information

For more information on influenza, preparing for a pandemic, and emergency kits go to:

www.pandemicflu.gov

(U.S. Department of Health and Human Services)

www.cdc.gov/flu

(Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

www.ready.gov/america

(U.S. Department of Homeland Security)

www.prepare.org

(Red Cross)

www.oes.ca.gov

(Governor's Office of Emergency Services)

www.getimmunizedca.org

(California Department of Health Services, Immunization Branch)



California Department of Health Services
Division of Communicable Disease Control
850 Marina Bay Parkway
Richmond, CA 94804
IMM-853 (9/06)

Build an emergency kit

During a pandemic, stores may be closed or out of supplies. It is important to keep extra supplies on hand. These supplies will also be useful for other types of emergencies.

Food and Water

- A 1- to 2-week supply of food and water
- A gallon of water per person, per day
- Long-lasting, ready-to-eat canned beans, fish, meats, fruits and vegetables, stews, and juice
- Packages of dry milk, soup, cereals, crackers, dried fruits and nuts, and protein bars (Refresh your supply every 4-6 months. Use up items that are about to expire.)
- Baby food or formula, if needed
- Food for your pets
- Manual can opener

Medical Supplies

Rotate or refresh medications regularly to make sure they have not expired.

- Your prescription drugs. Do not wait until the last minute to refill them.
- Medical supplies to monitor glucose and blood pressure or other health conditions
- A fever reducer and pain medicine, such as acetaminophen (Tylenol®) or ibuprofen (Motrin®)
- A supply of cold and cough medicines and other non-prescription drugs
- Anti-diarrhea medicine
- First-Aid kit: bandages, gauze, etc.
- Thermometer
- Surgical-type masks from a drug store or hardware store

Household Products

- Soap, liquid detergent, and alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- Disinfecting wipes or bleach for disinfecting things many people touch (Mix 1 gallon of water with ¼ cup bleach)
- A box of disposable vinyl or latex gloves to help protect you, while taking care of sick family members
- Boxes of tissue
- Toilet paper
- Trash bags
- Disposable diapers and feminine products.

Other Emergency Supplies

- Portable radio
- Batteries
- Flashlight
- Blankets



Ways to

PROTECT YOURSELF

from FLU and PANDEMIC FLU

