

Pandemic Flu: What it is and How to Prepare

When many people get a disease at the same time, it is called a pandemic. Pandemic flu is caused when people get sick or infected from a **new** flu virus that had not been harmful to people before. This type of flu spreads easily from person to person and can cause many people to become very ill or die. Pandemic flu may come and go in waves that can last for months at a time. Over the last 100 years, there have been three pandemic flu outbreaks. It is not known when the next pandemic flu will occur or how severe it will be.

Signs of Flu

The signs of seasonal flu are fever, cough, runny nose and muscle pain. The signs of pandemic flu are the same, but they may be more severe and affect more people. With pandemic flu, healthy adults may be at increased risk for problems.

What Is Avian Flu?

Avian flu, also called bird flu, is a disease found in wild and farm birds. There is a concern that the bird flu will become the next pandemic flu. Bird flu viruses do not often infect humans. There have been some rare cases of human infection from direct contact with infected birds. It is safe to eat well-cooked poultry such as chicken, turkey, duck and other game birds because cooking destroys germs, including bird flu viruses.

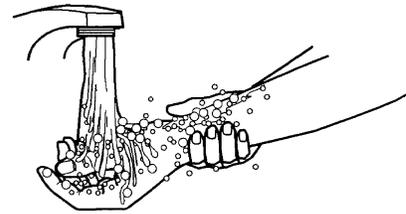
Experts are watching for changes in the bird flu virus that would cause it to infect people and be passed from person to person. This could lead to a pandemic.

Controlling the Spread of the Flu

It may take six months or longer to make a vaccine for pandemic flu. The supply of vaccine will be small in the early stages of a pandemic. We do not know if the medicines used to treat and prevent seasonal flu will help.

To help prevent spreading the flu, be sure to:

- **Wash your hands often** with soap and water. Use alcohol-based hand sanitizer when soap and water are not available.
- **Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.** The flu often spreads this way.
- **Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.** Throw the tissue away and wash your hands. If you do not have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your shoulder or arm.
- **Clean surfaces** such as countertops, sinks, faucets, doorknobs, telephones and light switches with a disinfectant cleaner or a cleaner with bleach. You can also mix your own water and bleach solution. Mix ten parts water with one part bleach.
- **Limit your contact with those who are ill.**
- **Avoid shaking hands** if you are ill and with others who are ill.
- **Stay away from others when you are sick.** Stay home from work, school or running errands if you can.
- **Get a full night's rest, eat a healthy diet and drink at least eight glasses of liquids each day.**



If many people are ill with pandemic flu:

- Hospitals and doctors' offices will be very busy.
- You may need to stay home to care for ill family or children.
- Schools and child care centers may close.
- Stores may be in short supply of food, water, medicines and medical supplies.
- Basic services and many businesses such as banks, post offices, restaurants and stores may close or have fewer workers.
- Buses may be stopped and gasoline may be limited.
- People may be told not to attend group functions such as volunteer meetings, clubs, sports, music events and church services.

Plan Ahead

Plan ahead to help protect you and your family and limit the effects of pandemic flu.

Use these three steps to prepare:

1. **Make a plan** for you and your family at home. Plan for how a pandemic might affect your work.
2. **Prepare an emergency kit** of supplies.
3. **Listen for information** about what to do and where to go during a flu outbreak.

Step 1. Make a Plan

Make a plan for you and your family at home. Plan for how a pandemic might affect your work.

Your Plan for Home

Talk to your family about this plan so they know what to do. Have a backup plan in case someone gets sick and cannot care for your family. Your plan should include:

- An emergency phone and e-mail contact list. Share it with family members, work, schools and child care centers.
- Someone to care for your children at home in case you cannot be there or you become ill.
- A local and an out of town emergency contact.
- Health information for each member of the family including the date of birth, blood type, allergies, past and current medical problems, current medicines and dosages, medical equipment and copies of medical insurance cards.
- Doctors' names and phone numbers.
- Locations of hospitals near work, school and home and their phone numbers.
- Locations of local and state health departments and their phone numbers.
- Pharmacy name and phone number.
- Religious or spiritual information.
- Someone to care for your pets in case you cannot be there or you become ill. Keep your pets up to date on vaccines and have a copy of your pets' vaccine records in case they need to go to a shelter.
- Pets' veterinarian name and phone number.

Your Plan for Work

If you work:

- Discuss work policies with your boss. Ask:
 - How the business will continue during a pandemic.

- If you can take time off to care for yourself or a family member.
- What will happen if you stay home with ill family.
- If you can work from home or if you are expected to come to work.
- Understand you may be asked to stay home from work or come in and do other tasks.
- Plan for less or no income if you are unable to work or the company closes.

If you own a business:

- Make an emergency plan and talk to your employees about it. Test and revise your plan as needed.
- Decide which employees and supplies are needed to maintain the business.
- Provide infection control supplies such as hand sanitizer, tissues and waste cans for soiled items.
- Look at how pandemic flu could impact the business' finances, shipping and travel.
- Define your policies on employees working from home, caring for ill family or paying for employee illness.

Step 2. Prepare an Emergency Kit

Have a **2 week supply** of these items for **each person and pet**.

Food and Other Items

- Water in clean, sealed plastic containers – store 1 gallon for each person for each day
- Ready to eat canned meats, fruits and vegetables
- Manual can opener
- Protein or fruit bars
- Dry cereal, granola, nuts and crackers
- Peanut butter
- Dried foods such as dried fruit and dehydrated meals
- Canned juices
- Powdered milk or cans of evaporated milk
- Cans or jars of baby food and baby formula
- Pet food

Medical, Health and Emergency Items

- Prescribed health supplies
- Prescription medicines
- Over the counter medicines to treat fever, pain, stomach problems, coughs, colds and diarrhea

- Fluids with electrolytes and vitamins such as sports drinks like Gatorade and Powerade
- Health information for each member of the family stored in a water proof container
- Soap and alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- Tissues and toilet paper
- Sleeping bags or blankets
- Flashlight and extra batteries
- Battery powered radio and extra batteries
- Matches in a waterproof container
- Baby supplies such as diapers and bottles
- Digital thermometer
- Trash bags
- Cleaning supplies
- An extra credit card and money

Step 3. Listen for Information

Stay calm and get as many facts as you can.

- Listen for reports on the television, radio or Internet.
- Go to www.pandemicflu.gov or www.ohiopandemicflu.gov for current information. This may only be available in English.