



The Next Flu Pandemic: What to Expect

A flu pandemic could touch us all

A flu (influenza) pandemic is an outbreak caused by a new human flu virus that spreads around the world. Because the pandemic flu virus will be new to people, many people could get very sick or could die. Seasonal flu shots do not protect people from pandemic flu.

It's not a matter of IF, but WHEN

Flu pandemics have happened throughout history. They occur from time to time, and some are worse than others.

Three flu pandemics happened in the 1900s. Near the end of World War I, the 1918 Flu Pandemic was the most severe flu pandemic of the century. It killed about 675,000 people in the United States and between 20 to 50 million people around the world.

If you check your family's history, you may find how your family was affected at that time. Almost everyone was touched in some way by the 1918 Flu Pandemic. Other flu pandemics in the 1900s were less severe.

Public health experts say it's not a matter of IF a flu pandemic will happen, but WHEN. We cannot predict when the next flu pandemic will happen.

Limiting contact helps to save lives

We have learned from past flu pandemics that during a pandemic, limiting contact among people helps to slow the spread of the virus and helps to save lives. Being around other people makes you more likely to get sick or to make others sick. The flu could spread and more people could get sick.

Until a vaccine can be made, limiting contact among people will be our main tool for helping to contain the disease and to prevent others from getting it.

During a flu pandemic, health officials may ask you and your community to take actions to help limit contact among people. Your daily routines could change for several months.

Actions to limit contact among people

In all flu pandemics, sick people will be asked to stay home. Most people with pandemic flu can be cared for at home. During a flu pandemic, hospitals may only have room to care for patients who are the most ill or require special care.

Make plans now to be able to stay home for at least



10 days if you are sick with pandemic flu. Staying home will keep you from giving it to others. Make a plan for who will take care of you and your household if you get sick.

In more severe flu pandemics, even people who are not sick may be asked to stay home.

Household members may be asked to stay home if a



person in the household is sick with pandemic flu. This is because other household members may be infected but not sick yet. They could spread the pandemic flu virus

to others. Household members may soon get sick, too. Make a plan for your household if everyone has to stay home.

In severe flu pandemics, students may be dismissed from school. Schools, after-school



functions, and child-care programs may be closed. Parents may be asked to protect their children by keeping them from being with other children outside of school. Find out what your school or child-care program is planning to do in a pandemic. Plan how you will take care of your children if they need to stay home and how you would limit contact with others.

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In severe flu pandemics, people may be asked to limit contact with others in the community and



workplace. Places where people gather, such as theaters and places of worship, may be closed. Events such as sporting events or concerts may be delayed or cancelled.



Businesses may allow some people to work from home or change work shifts to limit contact between workers.

Ask your workplace or community groups what they plan to do.

Plan now before a flu pandemic hits

You and your community need to start planning now while no flu pandemic exists. You need to be ready when the flu pandemic **first** arrives in your area. Information will be given on local TV, radio, websites, and in the newspaper. Limiting contact among people **early** will save more lives.

Making plans **now** will help you to be ready for the next flu pandemic, which could last up to several months.

What you can do now

You can look at planning guides to help you, your family, your workplace, and your community at www.pandemicflu.gov.

- Make a list of important contacts for home, school, and work.
- Talk with your neighbors, workplace, and school about how to plan for staying home if you or your household members are sick.



- Think about services you may need and make plans with your service providers.
- Although the flu pandemic may last several months, buy and store at least 2-weeks' supplies of food, water, medicine, and facemasks. (Food

and supplies may be hard to get during a pandemic.) When you have to stay home, these supplies will support your family and pets.

Be aware, plan ahead, and share with others what you have learned. Together, we can help protect ourselves, our families, and our communities.

Wash hands and cover coughs and sneezes

A new pandemic flu virus will spread easily from person to person, mostly through coughing and sneezing. When a sick person coughs or sneezes near you, you can breathe in droplets that have the virus. The droplets also could land on surfaces you may touch with your hands.

Get in the habit of washing your hands often and covering your coughs and sneezes. These actions can help you stay healthy now. They also may help protect you and your family during a flu pandemic.

Teach your family the importance of these habits and have them practice now:



1. **Wash your hands often** with soap and water. If there is no soap and water, use an alcohol-based hand gel. Wash your hands before eating, drinking, or touching your face.



2. **Cover your mouth and nose** when you cough or sneeze. Throw used tissues away in a trash can, and wash your hands. If you do not have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your sleeve and not into your hands.

For more information

- Contact your local or state health department.
- Visit www.pandemicflu.gov.
- Call 1-800-CDC-INFO (232-4636).