

## Flu Checklist

**Influenza, also known as the flu, is a contagious respiratory disease caused by different strains of viruses. In the United States, there is a flu season that begins every fall and ends every spring. The type of flu people get during this season is called seasonal flu. Flu viruses spread from person to person when people who are infected cough or sneeze. Adults may be able to infect others 1 day before getting symptoms and as long as 5 days after getting sick.**

### Know the Difference

**Seasonal Flu**—A contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza (flu) viruses occurring every year. It affects an average of 5 percent to 20 percent of the U.S. population by causing mild to severe illness, and in some instances can lead to death.

**Epidemic**—The rapid spread of a disease that affects some or many people in a community or region at the same time.

**Pandemic**—An outbreak of a disease that affects large numbers of people throughout the world and spreads rapidly.

**Swine Flu**—Swine Influenza (swine flu) is a respiratory disease of pigs caused by type A influenza viruses that cause regular outbreaks in pigs. People do not normally get swine flu, but human infections can and do happen. Swine flu viruses have been reported to spread from person-to-person.

**Avian Influenza**—Commonly known as bird flu, this strain of influenza virus is naturally occurring in birds. Wild birds can carry the virus and may not get sick from it; however, domestic birds may become infected by the virus and often die from it.

### What should I do to avoid getting sick?



**A flu vaccine is available in the U.S. every year. Get your flu shot as soon as it is available for the best chance of protection.**

- Always practice good health habits to maintain your body's resistance to infection.
  - Eat a balanced diet.
  - Drink plenty of fluids.
  - Exercise daily.
  - Manage stress.
  - Get enough rest and sleep.
- Take these common sense steps to stop the spread of germs:
  - Wash hands frequently with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
  - Avoid or minimize contact with sick people (a minimum three feet distancing is recommended).
  - Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
  - Cover your mouth and nose with tissues when you cough and sneeze. If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into the crook of your elbow.
  - Stay away from others as much as possible when you are sick.
- Adopt business/school practices that encourage employees/students to stay home when sick.
- Get a flu shot every year. Vaccination is one of the most effective ways to minimize illness and death.

### Are you considered high risk for flu-related complications?

- The following groups of people are at an increased risk: people age 50 or older, pregnant women, people with chronic medical conditions, children age 6 months and older and people who live with or care for anyone at high risk.
- People at high risk should have their vaccinations updated every year and receive pneumococcal pneumonia vaccine if age 50 or older, as directed by their physician.

### Do I have the flu?



#### Be aware of common flu symptoms:

- High fever
- Severe body aches
- Headache
- Extreme tiredness
- Sore throat
- Cough
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Vomiting and/or diarrhea (more common in children than in adults)
- *NOTE: Having all of these symptoms doesn't always mean that you have the flu. Many different illnesses have similar symptoms.*

#### Diagnosing the flu:

- It may be difficult to tell if you are suffering from the flu or another illness.
- Your health care provider may be able to tell you if you have the flu.
- If you develop flu-like symptoms and are concerned about possible complications, consult your health care provider.

#### Potential risks and serious complications of the flu:

- Bacterial pneumonia
- Dehydration
- Worsening of chronic medical conditions
- Ear infections
- Sinus problems

### What should I do when someone is sick?



- Designate one person as the caregiver.
- Keep everyone's personal items separate. All household members should avoid sharing pens, papers, clothes, towels, sheets, blankets, food or eating utensils unless cleaned between uses.
- Disinfect doorknobs, switches, handles, computers, telephones, toys and other surfaces that are commonly touched around the home or workplace.
- Wash everyone's dishes in the dishwasher or by hand using very hot water and soap.
- Wash everyone's clothes in a standard washing machine as you normally would. Use detergent and very hot water and wash your hands after handling dirty laundry.
- Wear disposable gloves when in contact with or cleaning up body fluids.

### Terminology defined

**Immunity** to a disease is defined by the presence of antibodies to that disease in a person's system. Most people have some resistance to infections, either after they recover from an illness or through vaccination. Seasonal flu viruses change over time and immunity to them cannot be acquired unless vaccination is administered.

**Quarantine** is the physical separation of healthy people who have been exposed to an infectious disease from those who have not been exposed.

**Isolation** is a state of separation between persons or groups to prevent the spread of disease.

**Social distancing** is a practice imposed to limit face-to-face interaction in order to prevent exposure and transmission of a disease.



# PANDEMIC FLU

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## 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/>.



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## 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).



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