

PANDEMIC FLU NEWSLETTER

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Take the Lead: Working Together to Prepare Now

Preparing for a pandemic influenza outbreak involves everybody. The threat of pandemic influenza is real, and America needs leadership from respected community members to prepare our towns and cities, reduce the impact of pandemic flu on individuals and families, and reduce or even prevent serious damage to the economy.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and other public health experts agree that it is not a question of **IF** a pandemic will occur, but **WHEN** it will occur. If

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Pandemic Flu Preparedness

The Possibility of a Pandemic Is Real: Setting the Stage

You may already have heard the word "pandemic," and you may be wondering what it really means. A flu (influenza) pandemic is an outbreak of a new flu virus that spreads around the world. The virus will spread easily from person to person, mostly through coughing and sneezing. Because the virus is new to people, everyone will be at risk of getting it.

Pandemics have occurred repeatedly throughout history. Few people alive today can recall the last major pandemic (1918–1919), and they typically regard the potential of such an event as impossible. This is not the case. In fact, scientists think the H5N1 virus, better known as avian (bird) flu, may be changing and could evolve into a pandemic flu virus.

During the next pandemic, many people will get sick and some will die. If a pandemic similar to the pandemic of 1918 were to happen today, health experts estimate that 90 million Americans could get sick, and nearly 2 million Americans could die. People will not be able to come to work because they are sick or are caring for someone who is sick. Services in our community, such as utilities, grocery stores, and public transportation, may be disrupted. Schools may be dismissed. Eventually there will be a vaccine; however it will take time to produce a large supply.

Preparing now will make it easier for you and your family during a pandemic. We encourage you to take some simple steps,

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America is not adequately prepared, pandemic flu could seriously affect everyone economically.

Government alone can't prepare the nation for pandemic flu; this challenge requires your help. As a leader in your community, you can play a powerful role in encouraging your employees, patients, and members and others whom you represent to prepare by providing information and guidance and by preparing yourself.

This kit was developed by HHS and CDC along with input from community leaders. It is designed to provide you with key information and tools to help your organization or practice understand the threat of a pandemic and prepare for it now.

This toolkit provides the following:

- Information for you about pandemic flu
- Ready-to-use and ready-to-tailor resources prepared by HHS and CDC
- Ideas and materials to encourage your organization to prepare and to encourage other leaders to get involved

Pandemic preparedness efforts are an important part of community leadership. We thank you for joining community leaders across the Nation in taking steps to ensure America's health and prosperity in the 21st century.

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Talking Points on Pandemic Flu Preparedness

Is the threat of pandemic flu real?

- ✓ The threat of a flu pandemic is real.
- ✓ The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and other leading public health experts say it is not a question of IF a pandemic will occur, but WHEN it will occur.

- ✓ Experts are concerned that the H5N1 virus (bird flu) is changing and could evolve into a pandemic flu virus.
- ✓ A flu pandemic could start anywhere and spread quickly.

Have there been flu pandemics in the past?

- ✓ There were three flu pandemics in the 20th century.
- ✓ The 1918–1919 flu pandemic overwhelmed the United States and the world, causing the deaths of at least 675,000 Americans and 50 million people worldwide.
- ✓ If a pandemic of similar severity occurred today, 90 million Americans could become ill, and nearly 2 million Americans could die.

Why do we need to prepare?

- ✓ Preparing *now* may make it easier for you and your family during a pandemic.
- ✓ During a pandemic, you may need or want to stay home for an extended period of time, and essential goods may be in short supply.
- ✓ If you do not prepare *before* a pandemic, it will be harder for you to follow important health advice *when* a pandemic occurs, such as staying home for longer periods of time.
- ✓ While the Government is working to improve vaccine development technology, there may not be a vaccine for 4-6 months once a pandemic starts.
- ✓ If everyone who *can* prepare *does* prepare, responders will be able to help more people, particularly those most in need, during a pandemic.
- ✓ The Government cannot do this alone. It's up to each of us to prepare at home, in the community, and at work.

How can we prepare?

- ✓ **Stock up** on food, medicines, and supplies to make it easier to stay at home:

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INCENTIVE IDEAS

Listed below are some additional ideas for encouraging pandemic preparedness.

- ✚ Provide food/refreshments for those who attend presentations on pandemic preparedness. For example, host a brown-bag lunch session and provide dessert.
- ✚ Start a monthly raffle, and enter employees who attend pandemic preparation presentations.
- ✚ Mail the "Fact Sheets" to employees' homes or leave them in their office mailboxes, and reward those who complete the checklists.
- ✚ Present your employee(s) or members with a gold star or another prize as a reward for stocking up on foods and necessities at home.
- ✚ Recognize those who contribute ideas on how to encourage pandemic preparation.

LINKS TO RESOURCES

Comprehensive pandemic flu information:
Follow the link below to access a comprehensive and searchable Web site cataloging U.S. Government avian and pandemic flu information.
<http://www.pandemicflu.gov/>

Community planning:
Follow the link below to find tools to assist your group in planning for a flu pandemic.
<http://www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/community/index.html>

State and local pandemic flu planning:
HHS and other Federal agencies provide funding, advice, and other support to States to assist with pandemic planning and preparation. Information on State and Federal planning and cooperation, including links to State pandemic plans, is available on this site.
<http://www.pandemicflu.gov/wherelive/index.html>

Individual planning:
Follow the link below to find guides, checklists, and information sheets you can use to help prepare you and your family for a flu pandemic.
<http://www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/individual/index.html>

International pandemic flu preparedness:
Follow the link below to access World Health Organization information on pandemic flu, the importance of preparation, global surveillance, and global preparedness plans.
<http://www.who.int/csr/disease/influenza/pandemic/en/>

Workplace planning:
Follow the link below to find information about workplace planning for a pandemic.
<http://www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/workplaceplanning/index.html>

Health care planning:
Follow the link below to find information about health care provider planning for a pandemic.
<http://www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/healthcare/index.html>

such as stocking up on food, medicines, and other essential supplies; practicing good health habits; and making advance plans to minimize confusion and disruption in an emergency.

While no one can prevent a pandemic from happening, government, communities, and individuals can work together to prepare the nation for a flu pandemic and minimize its impact. It is up to every one of us to be involved in preparing our families.

We are currently in the process of making pandemic flu information readily available. In the meantime, information about protecting yourself and your family can be found at www.pandemicflu.gov.

This information is brought to you by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

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- Store nonperishable foods, water, and other necessities.
- The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) recommends having a 2-week supply, but stocking up can take place over time.
- Stocking up can also be useful in other types of emergencies, such as power outages.
- Have a supply of over-the-counter and

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prescription drugs and other health supplies.

- ✓ **Improve your health habits *now*** to lower your risk of infection and slow the spread of disease during a pandemic:
 - Germs from the flu are spread from person to person by droplets from coughs and sneezes that move through the air to people nearby, or they are spread by touching surfaces that contain flu droplets.
 - Cover your nose and mouth when you cough or sneeze.
 - Sneeze and cough into a tissue or your sleeve. Sneezing into your bare hands can spread the germs.
- ✓ **Plan** for what you will do if the following happens:
 - if schools are dismissed,
 - if you can't go to work, or
 - if a family member becomes sick and needs care.
- ✓ **How can you learn more?**
 - Go to www.pandemicflu.gov.

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Good Health Habits

Help Keep Our Community Healthy!

As a member of our Texas Youth Commission family, your health is important to all of us. In an effort to keep everyone healthy and limit the spread of germs, please practice the following simple, yet essential, good health habits.

Cough and Sneeze Etiquette

- ❖ Never cough or sneeze into your bare hand. Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue to avoid spreading germs and then throw the tissue into the trash.

- ❖ Don't have a tissue handy? Cough or sneeze into the bend of your arm. It may feel strange at first, but soon it will come naturally.
- ❖ Wash your hands as soon as possible after coughing or sneezing. Use alcohol-based hand gel, if soap and water are not available.

Hand Washing Etiquette

- ❖ Always wash your hands:
 - after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing;
 - after touching your eyes, nose, or mouth;
 - after using the bathroom;
 - after being near someone who is ill;
 - after touching things handled by many people;
 - before and after eating or drinking; and
 - after handling garbage.
- ❖ Wash your hands thoroughly:
 - Wet your hands with warm running water.
 - Scrub between your fingers, on the backs of your hands, and under your nails for the amount of time it takes you to sing the "Happy Birthday" song twice.
 - Dry your hands with paper towels or an electric hand dryer.
 - Use a paper towel when you turn off the tap.
- ❖ If soap and water aren't available, use alcohol-based disposable hand wipes or gel sanitizers, keeping hands wet for 10-15 seconds.

Keep your telephones, computers, and other frequently touched machines or equipment clean and regularly disinfected.

These simple activities can have a big impact on the health of our community. We ask that you practice these good health habits, and we encourage you to implement them at home as well.

This information is brought to you by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

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Pandemic Flu Basics

The threat of a flu pandemic is real. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and other leading public health experts agree that it is not a question of IF a pandemic will occur, but WHEN it will occur. Preparing now will make a difference to you and your family during a pandemic.

What is a flu pandemic?

A flu (influenza) pandemic is an outbreak of a new flu virus that spreads around the world. The virus will spread easily from person to person, mostly through coughing and sneezing. Because the virus is new to people, everyone will be at risk of getting it.

What are the effects of a flu pandemic?

A flu pandemic will have a significant impact on society. A pandemic could result in a large number of people falling ill, including children and young adults, with many deaths. A pandemic could also require restrictions on travel, alterations to normal business operations, and dismissal of students from school to help slow the spread of infection.

The United States was overwhelmed by the 1918–1919 flu pandemic, which caused the deaths of at least 675,000 Americans. If a pandemic of similar severity occurred today, 90 million Americans could become ill, and approximately 2 million Americans could die.

In addition to the impact on human health, a flu pandemic presents a major threat to the world economy.

Why should we be concerned now?

CDC and other leading public health experts agree that the threat of a flu pandemic is real—it's not a question of IF one will happen, but WHEN it will happen. They are concerned now that the H5N1 virus (bird flu) is changing and could evolve into a pandemic flu virus.

Why should we prepare now?

It is impossible to predict when the next flu pandemic will occur or how severe it will be. Regardless of where a pandemic starts, everyone around the world will be at risk. If you do not

take steps to prepare *before* a pandemic, it will be harder for you to follow important health advice *when* a pandemic occurs.

What are the symptoms of a pandemic flu infection?

The symptoms of a pandemic flu infection will likely be similar to those of seasonal flu, but they may last longer and be more severe.

Will there be a vaccine available for pandemic flu?

A vaccine for pandemic flu may not be available for 4-6 months after a pandemic starts, and even then, it may only be available in limited amounts.

Will we need to wear facemasks and respirators during a flu pandemic?

If used correctly, facemasks and respirators may help prevent some exposure to flu viruses. However, facemasks should be used along with other preventive measures, such as frequent hand washing.

How does pandemic flu differ from seasonal flu?

There are important differences between pandemic flu and seasonal flu.

- ◇ People will have little or no immunity to pandemic flu since it is a new virus to humans. With seasonal flu, people have some immunity built up from previous exposure to the viruses.
- ◇ Symptoms of pandemic flu may be more severe than seasonal flu.
- ◇ More people are likely to die from pandemic flu than from seasonal flu.
- ◇ Pandemic flu could happen at any time of the year. Seasonal flu usually occurs in the fall and winter in the United States.
- ◇ Vaccines for pandemic flu may not be available for 4-6 months after a pandemic starts. Vaccines for seasonal flu are available each year and are based on known flu strains.

How is the United States preparing for the next flu pandemic?

- ◇ The United States is working with other nations and the World Health Organization (WHO) to strengthen systems to detect and contain outbreaks of

viruses that may cause a pandemic.

- ◇ The United States is improving vaccine technology in order to produce vaccines quickly and in large quantities.
- ◇ Preparedness information and checklists have been developed for different sectors of the economy and for individuals, families and communities, to help reduce the effects of a pandemic.
- ◇ The Government is providing funding, advice, and other support to States to assist with pandemic preparation.
- ◇ The Government is providing up-to-date information through www.pandemicflu.gov, the official Government Web site on this topic.
- ◇ The United States is stockpiling antiviral medicines, such as Tamiflu, to treat persons sick with pandemic flu.

How should individuals prepare?

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), CDC, and health experts ask individuals to stock up on foods and other necessities, improve health, and plan ahead for how they will care for themselves and family members during a flu pandemic.

Stock Up:

- ◇ Store nonperishable foods, bottled water, over-the-counter drugs, health supplies, and other necessities.
- ◇ HHS recommends having a 2-week supply, but stocking up can take place over time.
- ◇ These supplies can be useful in other types of emergencies, such as power outages.

Improve Health:

- ◇ Wash your hands with soap and water frequently throughout the day.
- ◇ Cover your nose and mouth with your sleeve or a tissue when you cough or sneeze.

Plan Ahead:

Plan for what you will do in the following cases:

- ◇ if schools are dismissed
- ◇ if you cannot go to work, or
- ◇ if you or a family member becomes sick and needs care.

How to Get Involved

Flu Pandemic Preparedness—Your Leadership Is Needed

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and other leading health experts agree that the threat of a flu pandemic is real and urge all levels of society to prepare. A flu (influenza) pandemic is an outbreak of a new flu virus that spreads around the world. The virus will spread easily from person to person, mostly through coughing and sneezing. Because the virus is new to people, everyone will be at risk of getting it.

Pandemics have occurred repeatedly throughout history. The most severe—the flu pandemic of 1918—was responsible for over 50 million deaths worldwide and affected roughly one-fifth of the world's population. Now, experts are concerned that the H5N1 virus (bird flu) is changing and could cause the next human flu pandemic.

If a pandemic of similar severity to that of 1918 were to occur today, estimates are that 90 million Americans could become ill, and nearly 2 million could die. In addition to the dramatic human toll, a flu pandemic poses a major threat to the global economy.

The government alone cannot prepare the nation for a pandemic. Our position in the community gives us a unique, powerful "voice" for spreading the word about this threat. Our leadership is essential in encouraging our group's "families" to prepare now to ensure that both they and their loved ones are ready to withstand a flu pandemic.

Preparation now, before an outbreak, could reduce sickness, death, and failed businesses. There are specific steps to help our group get prepared. Simple actions will help, such as encouraging our group to stock up on supplies to make it easier to stay

at home, and to practice proper hand washing.

Government leaders at HHS and CDC are asking employers, faith-based leaders, community leaders, and medical professionals to use their influence to inform Americans of the threat a pandemic poses and to encourage preparedness. Resources are available to help you communicate this information quickly and accurately.

Help spread the word. Go to www.takethelead.pandemicflu.gov to learn more about pandemic preparedness and your role.

This information is brought to you by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

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The information in this Newsletter came from the following source: <http://www.pandemicflu.gov>

Produced by the Texas Youth Commission-Health Services

Cover Your Cough Poster

