

PANDEMIC INFLUENZA What It Is and What You Can Do

This is NOT Your Regular Flu... Many scientists believe that we are close to experiencing the next pandemic.

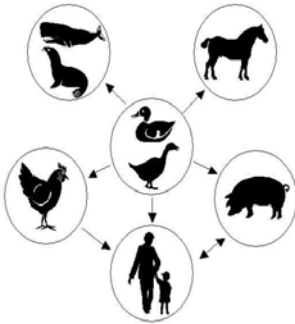
Pandemic Background

An influenza pandemic can occur when a new virus appears against which we have no immunity. Epidemics due a new influenza virus are likely to quickly spread around the world due to the increase in global transportation, urbanization and overcrowded conditions. Hospitals, clinics and medical offices will become quickly overwhelmed if the pandemic virus strain causes severe illness. Governments may close schools, workplaces, restrict travel, and impose quarantines.



There have been three influenza pandemics in the 20th century: in 1918, 1957, and 1968. All spread worldwide within a year of being detected. The 1918 pandemic was by far the most severe, killing over 20 million people worldwide. During the last 36 years, there has been no pandemic. Many scientists believe that we are closer to the next pandemic than we have ever been before.

Avian Influenza Outbreaks



International medical experts are concerned about current large outbreaks of Avian Influenza (Bird Flu). This is a highly contagious disease that can kill many species of birds. It is nearly impossible to stop. There are some birds that spread the virus without becoming sick. Around the world, hundreds of millions of birds have died or been killed in order to stop its spread. Some virus strains are more deadly (pathogenic) than others. It has also shown an ability to jump species, infecting pigs, cats, tigers, mice, and humans.

Currently the virus is not easily transmitted from one person to another (efficient human transmission), but viruses evolve over time. This disease has killed half the people who have become infected. If it evolves to be more easily spread there will be an increased chance of a pandemic. Vaccines are being developed but due to limited production capacity they may not be available to the public for 1-2 years. Anti-viral medications are available (Tamiflu, Relenza, Amantadine, Rimantadine) but some strains of the virus are resistant to these drugs. There are home test kits (QuickVue) to confirm if you have the flu but there are only 2 certified

laboratories in the U.S. can confirm if a person specifically has Bird Flu.

No one can predict with certainty what will occur. This may happen in a few months or in a few years. It is possible that nothing at all could happen. The best case scenario is that the virus changes and becomes harmless. The worst-case scenario is that the virus doesn't lose any of its current virulence. Without an effective vaccine there could be a high mortality rate, billions lost in commerce as borders close, disrupting trade and travel; global insecurity due to the reduced strength of armed forces and police. Planning may help to reduce transmission of the virus, to decrease cases, hospitalizations and deaths, to maintain essential services and to reduce the economic and social impact of a pandemic.

Share This Information & Be Prepared

Begin by sharing this information with others in your community, workplaces, unions, schools, churches, professional associations, volunteer groups, etc. Contact your state and local Department of Health and share your concerns. Speak with your supermarkets, utility companies and politicians.

What is needed is a detailed operational blueprint for how to get a population through one to three years of a pandemic. Such a plan must involve all the key components of society. In the private sector, the plan must coordinate the responses of the medical community, medical suppliers, food providers, and the transportation system. In the government sector, the plan should take into account officials from public health, law enforcement, and emergency management at the international, federal, state, and local levels. It is better to be prepared and not face an emergency than to be caught unprepared.

For more information...

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services www.pandemicflu.gov

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

For flu and pandemic information. English 888-246-2675; Spanish 888-246-2857; Clinicians 877-246-4625 www.cdc.gov/flu

Pandemic Influenza Information and Collaborative Planning

www.fluwiki.com

The purpose of the Flu Wiki is to help local communities prepare for and perhaps cope with a possible influenza pandemic. By pooling and sharing our knowledge, we hope to advance both preparation for and the ability to cope with events as they unfold.

Our goal is to be:

- a reliable source of information, as neutral as possible, about important facts useful for a public health approach to pandemic influenza
- a venue for anticipating the vast range of problems that may arise if a pandemic does occur
- a venue for thinking about implementable solutions to foreseeable problems

How Influenza Spreads

It is easily transmitted by inhaling exhaled or sneezed out particles from a sick person. When a host coughs, sneezes or exhales, large amounts of the virus are released into the environment. It can also be shed in stool and other body fluids. **A person can be transmitting flu 1 to 8 days before they feel any symptoms . Most people start feeling sick in about 2 days. You pass on the virus for up to a week after you stop feeling symptoms. Children under 12 are contagious up to 21 days after symptoms stop.**

It is not normally necessary to see your doctor about colds and flu. During a pandemic, it may be difficult to reach your doctor. Antiviral medications are only effective if taken within 48 hours of symptoms. Remember that antibiotics only kill bacteria and can do nothing to stop a cold or the flu which are caused by viruses. Bed rest and liquids are usually enough, acetaminophen or ibuprofen can lessen fever and body aches. Aspirin and other aspirin containing products should never be given to children or teenagers. Call your doctor if you have persistent fever, pain, or difficulty breathing.

If you are sick, cover your nose and mouth with a tissue every time you cough or sneeze. Also maintain a distance of several feet from people. Always cough or sneeze into a tissue and do not reuse it. Complications from the flu can lead to deadly secondary infections like bronchitis, pneumonia, encephalitis, or meningitis. Presence of blood or thick yellow/green mucus may be a sign of a secondary infection. Another complication that may occur is a cytokine storm (the body's immune response fills the lungs with liquid).

Is it a Cold or Flu?

Symptom	Cold	Flu
Fever	Rare	Common (101-104 deg F)
Cough	Mild	Common, may be severe
Headache	Rare	Common, may be severe
Fatigue, Aches & Pains	Mild	Common, may be severe
Runny Nose & Sneezing	Common	Occasionally
Sore Throat	Common	Occasionally
Diarrhea	Rare	Occasionally, may be severe



What You Can Do To Prepare Now

- **Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.** This is how a virus enters your body. Learn to cough into the crook of your arm rather than your hands to prevent spreading infection.
- **Hand washing is the single most important way to prevent infection.** Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and running water for at least 20 seconds and dry them completely with a disposable paper towel. Hand sanitizers also kill viruses.
- Wash before and after touching your face, after touching things in public like doorknobs, handrails, ATM machines, and after going to the toilet.
- Limit travel in areas where the virus is found (<http://www.cdc.gov/travel/outbreaks.htm>).
- Get a flu vaccination. It will not protect you from Bird Flu but it will prevent the Bird Flu virus from adapting to spread more easily.
- Purchase and store over-the-counter medications to be used for influenza if someone in your family gets sick.
- Determine how much food, household supplies, and prescriptions you would need in case a quarantine or prolonged shortage occurs.
- Speak with a financial advisor about risks from an economic depression.
- Prepare a will and an Advance Directive (Living Will).
- Stay healthy by eating a balanced diet, drink at least 6 glasses of water per day, get at least 15 minutes of exercise each day, sleep at least 7 hours per night.
- **Be prepared to stay at home for 3 months in self isolation (quarantine). A pandemic may last from 1 to 3 years.**

What You Can Do If A Pandemic Occurs

- **If you are sick stay home! Adults are contagious up to 7 days and children up to 21 days after symptoms stop.**
- Stay away from people who are obviously sick.
- Avoid contact with sick or dead birds and animals. Avoid contact with wild birds. Do not feed birds.
- Avoid places such as poultry farms and markets where live poultry, ducks, and pigs are raised or kept, as these animals were found to be carriers of the avian influenza virus.
- Influenza viruses are destroyed by heat. Learn proper hygiene practices in handling, cooking and storing all meats and eggs.
- The virus can live in water and hard surfaces for several days. For disinfecting surfaces like doorknobs, handrails, sinks, phones, computer keyboards, etc.; use a 0.1% sodium hypochlorite solution (1 part bleach to 50 parts water) or 70% alcohol for metal surfaces. To kill the virus you need to allow the bleach or alcohol to remain in contact with the surface for 2 minutes. Items contaminated with bodily fluids should be disinfected with a 1% bleach solution (1 part bleach to 5 parts water) with a contact time of 10-15 minutes. Use a trigger pump sprayer instead of aerosols because they may spread the virus.
- Wear a face mask to protect yourself in public. Any face mask will help to prevent you from touching your nose and mouth. The World Health Organization recommends N95 type mask as personal protective equipment.
- Do not share eating utensils, drinking glasses, towels or other personal items.
- **Remember the flu can be spread 1-8 days before symptoms appear. Avoid close contact and shaking hands with people.**