

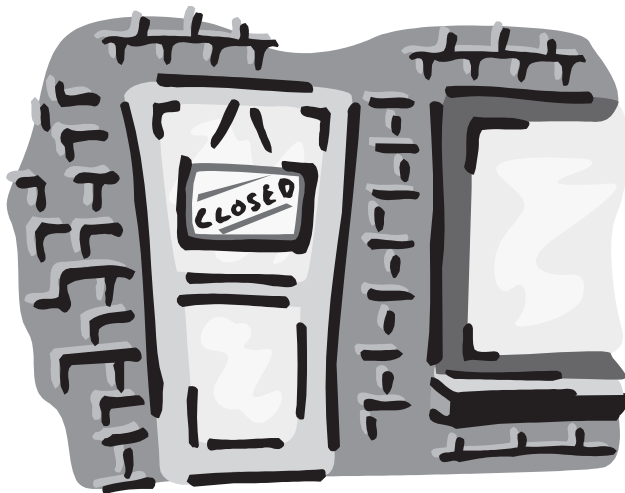
Preparing for Pandemic Influenza

What is pandemic influenza? It's a global outbreak of influenza, or flu. Over the last century, the world has seen three influenza pandemics (1968, 1957, and 1918). The most recent pandemic (1968) was mild—about the same number of people in the United States were hospitalized and died as with regular flu.

However, the pandemic of 1918 was devastating. Half the world's population became infected, and from 20 million to 40 million people died. All three pandemics have been caused by a type of avian influenza (bird flu) virus.

No human flu pandemic is occurring anywhere in the world right now. However, if a serious pandemic began, it would have many effects on daily life. For example:

- Students would be dismissed from classes.



- Basic services (such as power and water) are likely to be disrupted.
- Stores might be closed or out of supplies.
- Banks might close.
- Hospitals could be overwhelmed.

Q: What Will Happen During a Pandemic?

During an influenza pandemic, your local public health department may ask or require that people do several things to help limit the spread of disease in your community. Here are some examples.

- Stay home.
 - Anyone who is sick should stay home.
 - Businesses and schools may be closed. Anyone who is not an “essential worker” (such as staff at power plants and public works, medical personnel, law enforcement) may be asked to stay home for a prolonged period of time.
- Avoid large groups.
 - Everyone, even people who are well, should stay away from large gatherings of people—sporting events, the movies, worship services. During a pandemic, such gatherings might be cancelled to help limit the spread of flu virus.
- Practice social distancing.
 - If you must go out, stay at least six feet away from other people.



Isolation and Quarantine

Isolation and quarantine are public health measures used to contain the spread of a contagious disease.

Isolation means separating sick people from others.

- It applies to people who are ill.

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- Isolation may occur in hospitals, other health care facilities, or at home.
- Isolation protects healthy people and caregivers. It also protects infected people from other diseases.
- It's a standard public health practice to control disease and can be legally enforced.

Quarantine means restricting the actions of people who are healthy but have been exposed to the disease.

- It limits freedom of travel and other activities.
- Quarantine may be voluntary or involuntary (legally enforced).
- It may last for as long ten days.
- Quarantine may be one of the first steps health officials take during an influenza pandemic.



What Can You Do Now to Prepare for a Pandemic?

Stay informed. Pay attention to and seek information from public health officials on prevention and control.

- Be alert for information on the signs and symptoms of the specific influenza.
- Visit public health Websites periodically for up-to-date information.
 - The federal Website, www.pandemicflu.gov, hosts an array of information and links to other important resources.



Prepare to “shelter in place” (stay home) for several weeks. One of the best things you can do now to help protect yourself and your family is to be prepared. Store enough food, medical supplies, and other emergency supplies to last for at least two weeks.



For more information on specific items to have on hand, see the *Individuals and Families Checklist for Pandemic Flu Planning.*