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Pandemic Flu

Pandemic Flu . . . It's not the flu you're used to.

Unlike the flu that goes around every year, pandemic flu is different. A pandemic of flu occurs when a new flu virus our bodies haven't come across before spreads around the world, causing serious illness and possibly death. It spreads easily from one person to another, and can infect an entire community in a matter of days.

In the past 100 years, we have seen three pandemics—in 1918, 1957 and 1968. We're overdue for another pandemic. It's not a question of if, but when.

But, you can take steps to protect yourself, your family and your community from flu every day.

How to Protect Yourself from Pandemic Flu



There likely will not be a flu shot available during the early months of a flu pandemic. But, there are still simple things you can do to keep yourself from getting or spreading the flu:

- Wash your hands often with soap and warm water. Wash your hands for as long as it takes to sing "Happy Birthday" all the way through twice.
- Stay home from work or school when you are sick.
- Cover your mouth and nose when you sneeze and cough.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick. If you end up getting sick, keep this in mind to protect the people you live and work with from getting sick.



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Questions to Ask Yourself to Prepare for Pandemic Flu

A flu pandemic may cause schools, businesses, grocery stores and other places that are part of our daily life to shut down. To prepare yourself and your family, there are many issues to consider, including:

- What should you do if your children's school or childcare center closes because of pandemic flu?
- What would you do if grocery stores and pharmacies closed? Do you have enough food and water at home to feed yourself and your family for at least two weeks? What about your medications?
- If a flu pandemic strikes, how will you care for family members at home, including those with serious or long-term illness?
- Would you be able to use sick leave or work from home if you needed to?
- Does your workplace have a plan for how to respond if a flu pandemic or other disaster strikes and do you know what that plan is?



Signs and Symptoms of Pandemic Flu

There is not a pandemic of flu in people. However, experts predict that the symptoms of pandemic flu will be the same as the flu we see every year.

These include:

- Headache
- Muscle Aches
- Fever
- Tiredness
- Sore Throat
- Stuffy or Runny Nose
- Cough

Pandemic Flu: Key Facts

More sickness and deaths. Every year, more than 200,000 people in the U.S. have to go to the hospital because of seasonal flu, and 36,000 die from it. However, a flu pandemic could send millions to the hospital and kill hundreds of thousands.

No flu shot. Annual flu shots will not protect you from the new flu virus that causes a pandemic. Flu shots to protect yourself will not be immediately available when a flu pandemic strikes.

But, there is medicine. If there is a flu pandemic, and you catch the flu, there is medicine that may make you feel better. This medicine is called antiviral medication, but it is likely to be in short supply.

It is safe to eat chicken and eggs. Avian flu, which oftentimes does cause pandemics, is not spread through properly cooked food. To make sure your chicken is cooked all the way through, use a meat thermometer. Your chicken should be at a temperature of at least 165 °F throughout. Never eat raw eggs or food with raw egg ingredients, such as cookie dough or cake batter. Be sure to thoroughly cook all dishes with raw eggs before eating them.

Keep an eye on your pet. Pets, including birds, can get avian flu. However, there is no risk to pets in the United States at this time, as the deadly form of H5N1 avian flu has not been seen here yet.



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