

Preparing for a Pandemic

*What you need to know
about seasonal and pandemic flu*



A message from the Health Officer

An influenza, or flu, pandemic occurs when a new flu virus appears that easily spreads from person-to-person and around the world. A pandemic flu would spread rapidly, and would affect all age groups. It would cause illness in a high proportion of those infected. The World Health Organization warns that a flu pandemic could infect between 25 and 30 percent of the world's population - three million people in the state of Michigan alone.

So what do you need to know about pandemic flu? It's important to know both how a pandemic outbreak may affect your day-to-day routine, and what actions you can take to help lessen the impact of an influenza pandemic on you and your family. Because a pandemic will happen almost everywhere at nearly the same time, few communities will have resources to spare. That's why it's so important for you to prepare your family for a pandemic event.

This guide, developed by the Mid-Michigan District Health Department (MMDHD), will provide you with information about seasonal and pandemic flu, how to stop the spread of illness, and how to plan for a possible pandemic. By educating yourself and planning ahead, you can reduce the effects of a pandemic on your family.... and our community.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kimberly Singh". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "K" and "S".

Kimberly Singh, M.A.
Health Officer
Mid-Michigan District Health Department

Seasonal flu vs. pandemic flu

Seasonal Flu

Seasonal flu is caused by influenza viruses that are similar to those already affecting people. Flu shots are available every year to protect against seasonal flu.

Healthy adults are usually not at risk for serious complications.

The very young, the elderly, and people with serious health conditions are at an increased risk for serious complications, such as pneumonia or even death.

The more common flu that spreads each winter generally causes a moderate impact on society, for example, some schools are closed and sick people are encouraged to stay home.

SYMPTOMS include fever, cough, sore throat, headache, and muscle pain.

Pandemic Flu

Pandemic flu is caused by a new influenza virus that people have not been exposed to before. Flu shots might not be available during the beginning of a pandemic because large amounts of vaccine cannot be made until experts know the makeup of the virus.

Healthy adults may face a higher risk for serious complications.

It is not possible to prevent or stop a pandemic flu once it begins spreading. Infected people can spread the disease from one day prior to the onset of symptoms to about five days after onset. This makes it extremely easy for the virus to spread rapidly.

A severe pandemic could change daily life for some time. People may choose to stay home or be forced to stay home if they are sick or need to care for others. Travel and public gatherings could be limited. Basic services and access to supplies could be disrupted.

SYMPTOMS will be similar to seasonal flu, but may be more severe and complications could be more serious.

What is bird flu?

Just like people, birds can get sick from flu viruses, but bird flu viruses rarely infect people. The bird flu that has been spreading quickly among wild birds and poultry in many countries is a very serious type of bird flu called H5N1. Currently, the H5N1 bird flu does not spread easily from person-to-person. Most of the human infections with bird flu in other parts of the world were caused by very close contact with infected birds. In the United States, poultry farms are very careful to prevent disease.

Health experts are concerned that H5N1 could change into a virus that spreads easily from person-to-person. Scientists around the world are watching for changes in bird flu viruses because that could signal the beginning of a pandemic.

Be a flu fighter!

A pandemic strain of the flu is spread just like seasonal flu- through droplets from coughs or sneezes.

You can take common-sense steps now to limit the spread of flu. Here's how:

- Teach your children to wash their hands with lots of soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Be sure to set a good example by doing this yourself.
- Keep children who are sick at home. Don't send them to school, and keep them away from others until they are better.
- Keep all childhood vaccinations up-to-date, and make sure everyone in your household gets a flu shot each year. While the vaccine available for the ordinary flu will not protect you from a pandemic influenza virus, it will protect you from getting seasonal flu, which could weaken your immune system and your resistance to a pandemic influenza.
- If you smoke- quit. Smokers are more likely to get seasonal flu, and children exposed to secondhand smoke are more likely to have weakened immune systems and greater susceptibility to illness.

Slowing the spread of a pandemic

It is not possible to prevent or stop a pandemic flu once it begins to spread. Infected people can spread the disease from one day prior to the onset of symptoms, to about five days after onset. During a pandemic, people may be asked or required to do certain things to help decrease the spread of the disease. Some examples are to:

Wash hands frequently with soap and water, ESPECIALLY...

- More frequently when someone in your home is sick.
- Before you eat and after you use the bathroom.
- Before, during and after you prepare food.
- After handling animals or their waste.

Stay home

People who are sick should stay home. Children should not go to school if they are sick. Staying home will be especially important during a pandemic to limit the spread of the disease.

Avoid large groups

During a pandemic, people will need to stay away from places where others gather—such as sporting events, movies, grocery stores, and shopping malls. Large events may be cancelled and large facilities closed to limit the spread of the flu virus.



Isolation

Isolation is for people who are already ill. When someone is isolated, they are separated from people who are healthy. Having the sick person isolated (separated from others) can help slow or stop the spread of disease. People who are isolated can be cared for in their homes, in hospitals, or other health care facilities. Isolation is usually voluntary, but local, state and federal governments have the power to require the isolation of sick people to protect the public.

Quarantine

Quarantine is for people who have been exposed to the disease but who are not sick. When someone is placed in quarantine, they are also separated from others. Even though the person is not sick at the moment, they were exposed to the disease and may still become infectious and spread the disease to others.

Quarantine can help slow or stop this from happening. States generally have the power to enforce quarantines within their borders.



Planning for a pandemic



As you and your family plan for a flu pandemic, think about the challenges you might face. The services you depend on may be disrupted. Here are some things to consider:

- Plan for the possibility that usual services may be disrupted. These could include hospitals, clinics, banks, restaurants, government offices and post offices, and telephone and cell phone companies.
 - Gatherings, such as volunteer meetings and worship services may be cancelled. Prepare contact lists including conference calls, telephone chains, and email lists.
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- Consider that the ability to travel, even by car if there are fuel shortages, may be limited. Talk to your family about where family members will go in an emergency and how they will receive care in case you can't communicate with them.
 - Widespread illness could result in the closing of ATMs and banks. Keep a small amount of cash or traveler's checks in small denominations for easy use.

Create a kit

During a pandemic you may not be able to get to a store or stores may be out of supplies. It is important for you to have extra supplies on hand, enough to last your entire family (including pets) at least 3 days. Following is a list of suggested items for your emergency kit. For more information, please visit www.do1thing.us.

- Water- A two-week supply of water, one gallon of water per person per day in plastic containers.
- Non-perishable food- A two-week supply of nonperishable food that doesn't need refrigeration, preparation (including the use of water), or cooking. Include formula if you have an infant, pet food, etc.
- Prescription drugs- An extra supply of prescription drugs.

- First Aid items-

Latex gloves (two pair)	Thermometer
Ipecac syrup	Antiseptic
Soap	Eye wash solution
Antibiotic ointment	Rubbing alcohol
Pain reliever	Fluids with electrolytes
Burn ointment	Anti-diarrhea medication
Adhesive bandages, sterile dressings	Towels
Antacid	Laxative
Medicine dropper	Prescribed medical supplies
Scissors	Tweezers
Sunscreen	Toothbrush, toothpaste
Denture supplies	Cough and cold medicine

- List of important phone numbers
- Clothing and bedding- One complete change of warm and cold weather clothing per person; jackets, shoes, hats, gloves, sleeping bags, and blankets.
- Important documents- Insurance policies, identification, bank account records in a waterproof container.
- Miscellaneous items- Cell phone charger, battery-powered radio, extra batteries, flashlight, wrench or pliers, manual can opener, cash/traveler's checks, plates, plastic utensils, plastic cups, paper towels, toilet paper, liquid dish soap, paper, pencil, pen, sewing kit, feminine supplies, personal hygiene products, fire extinguisher, maps, matches in a waterproof container, battery powered lantern, pet leashes, pet carrier, and utility knife.

Planning for school closings



Your child's school or childcare facility may be closed to limit the spread of pandemic flu. School closings may be a public health tool for containing disease early in a pandemic, and could occur on short notice. Take steps now to prepare for an extended stay at home.

- Talk to teachers, administrators, and parent-teacher organizations about your school's pandemic plan, and offer to help with planning efforts.
- Plan now in case children must stay at home for an extended period of time. School closings may accompany restrictions on public gatherings, including malls and movie theatres.
- Plan activities your children can do at home. Have learning materials, such as books, school supplies, and educational computer activities and movies on hand.
- Talk to teachers, administrators, and parent-teacher organizations about possible activities, lesson plans and exercises that children can do at home if schools are closed.

Is it the flu?

The symptoms of influenza are:

- Fever- low (99 degrees F) to high (104 degrees F), usually for three days, but may persist for four to eight days. Sometimes fever will go away and return a day later.
- Aching muscles
- Cough
- Headache
- Joint aches
- Eye pain
- Feeling very cold or having shaking chills
- Feeling very tired
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose



If your child develops these symptoms...

- Keep them home from school!
- They should rest and drink plenty of fluids.
- Give fever reducers. *Do not use aspirin in children or teenagers as it can cause Reye's syndrome.
- Have them wash hands frequently.
- Teach them to cover coughs and sneezes with tissue or "do it in their sleeve."
- Contact your health care provider for further advice.

When your child stays home sick, it is important to report the illness as accurately as possible to the school office. Mid-Michigan District Health Department monitors school illness reports to watch for trends. During a flu pandemic, keeping track of these trends will help health officials determine when and whether to close schools, whether the outbreak is increasing in scope, and whether to declare an epidemic.

More information

For more information on pandemic flu, visit the following websites or call the numbers provided.

[U.S. Department of Health and Human Services](#)

www.pandemicflu.gov

[Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)

www.cdc.gov

1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636)

[Michigan Department of Community Health](#)

www.michigan.gov/prepare

[Do1Thing](#)

www.do1thing.us

[Mid-Michigan District Health Department](#)

The Mid-Michigan District Health Department has experts on staff who can answer your questions about pandemic flu and help you with your planning efforts. For more information, contact the MMDHD branch office nearest you and ask to speak with its Emergency Preparedness Coordinator.

Clinton County Branch Office

1307 E. Townsend Road
St. Johns, MI 48879
989-224-2195



Gratiot County Branch Office

151 Commerce Drive
Ithaca, MI 48847
989-875-3681

Montcalm County Branch Office

615 N. State Street; Suite 1
Stanton, MI 48888
989-831-5237

www.mmdhd.org

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Contact Mid-Michigan District Health Department for more information.