

# Pandemic Flu

## Frequently asked questions about Pandemic Flu

**What is a pandemic?** A pandemic is a global disease outbreak. An influenza pandemic occurs when a new influenza virus emerges for which people have little or no immunity. The disease spreads easily from person to person; can cause serious illness or death; and can move across the country and around the world in a very short time. We experienced a pandemic flu in 2009/2010 with the H1N1 virus.

**What is the difference between pandemic flu and seasonal flu?** Certain strains of influenza occur annually worldwide and should not be confused with pandemic flu. These “seasonal” viruses cause the high fevers, coughs and chills familiar to all Ohioans, especially between December and April, which is the state’s peak period of seasonal flu activity.

**What might happen during a future pandemic flu?** History tells us we will eventually have another influenza pandemic. When an influenza pandemic occurs, it is certain our everyday lives will drastically change. These changes may include temporary closing of schools or cancellation of events, disruption of normal services such as electricity and water and some shortages. Planning for an influenza pandemic is similar to preparing for any emergency. Take time to understand the needs of your household and take action to help lessen the impact of an influenza pandemic on you and your family.

## What you can do now

When preparing for a possible emergency such as pandemic influenza, it's best to think first about the basics of survival, including fresh water, food and medical supplies. Because it may be necessary to protect yourself and others from spreading the flu virus, you may be asked to remain in your home for several days. You can prepare now by creating a stockpile of emergency supplies.

**What is stockpiling?** Experts recommend you have at least a one-week stockpile of food, water and goods purchased over time to limit financial impact and prevent store shortages. **Store a supply of drinking water and food.** Buy bottled water or fill and seal water containers tightly, label them with a date and store in a cool, dark place. Rotate water every six months.

- Bottled and/or filtered water – recommend at least one gallon of water per person per day, for drinking and sanitation. Store water tightly in clean plastic containers such as soft drink bottles. Children, nursing mothers and sick people may need more water.

## Examples of food and non perishables

- Ready-to-eat canned meats, fruits, vegetables and soups
- Rice
- Protein or fruit bars
- Dry cereal or granola
- Peanut butter or nuts
- Dried fruit
- Crackers
- Canned juices
- Canned or jarred baby food and formula
- Pet food and prescriptions

## Medical, first-aid and hygiene supplies

Have non-prescription drugs and other health supplies on hand. Be sure to periodically rotate medications. It is also a good idea to have medical information for all family members documented and packaged with your kit. This medical history document should include the following for everyone: allergies; past and current medical conditions; and current medications and dosages.

- Prescription medications
- Prescribed medical supplies such as glucose and blood-pressure monitoring equipment
- Soap and water, or alcohol-based hand wash
- Tissues, toilet paper and disposable diapers
- Medicines for fever, such as acetaminophen, ibuprofen or aspirin
- Thermometer
- Vitamins
- Fluids with electrolytes such as sports drinks

### **Emergency Supplies**

- Flashlight
- Portable, battery-powered radio
- Batteries for flashlight, radio and any medically-prescribed equipment
- Manual can opener
- Garbage bags
- Camping or other stand-alone stove and fuel

### **RESPIRATORY ETIQUETTE**

Health officials recommend people continue to take the same precautions to protect themselves against a potential influenza pandemic as they would from colds and seasonal flu. Make good respiratory etiquette a habit.

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue away after you use it.
- Cough or sneeze into your elbow or upper sleeve if you don't have a tissue.
- Try not to touch your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs often spread this way.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze or use the restroom and before eating. If you are not near soap and water, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Stay away from people who are sick as much as you can.
- If you get sick, stay home from work or school.

### **PRACTICE GOOD HEALTH HABITS**

Preventive measures and good health habits can help your body stay healthy and fight off the flu.

- Eat a balanced diet that includes plenty of vegetables, fruits and whole grain products.
- Drink plenty of water and go easy on salt, sugar, alcohol and saturated fat.
- Exercise on a regular basis. Thirty or more minutes of physical activity most days of the week can help boost your immunity.
- Get plenty of rest. Sleep also is shown to boost your body's ability to fight off illness.