

An influenza pandemic is a worldwide outbreak of a new flu virus.

An influenza—or flu—pandemic is an outbreak of a new type of flu virus that spreads rapidly from one country to another. The new virus affects only birds or animals at first, but gradually changes to affect people as well. A pandemic begins when the new flu virus is easily passed from person to person.

No one knows how bad a flu pandemic will be, but everyone should be prepared for the worst.

- It may be difficult to get medical care.
- Supplies and services may be limited.
- You may be asked to stay away from others.
- It will take months to develop a vaccine against the new virus, so flu shots will not be immediately available.
- Medicines for flu symptoms may be in short supply.
- Travel may be difficult.
- The pandemic may last a long time.

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DOH Pub 820-039 5/2007
www.doh.wa.gov/pandhu/



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Washington State Department of Health — www.doh.wa.gov/pandhu/
Local public health agencies in Washington state — www.doh.wa.gov/LHJMap/
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services — www.pandemicflu.gov
World Health Organization (WHO) — www.who.int

Learn more



WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Pandemic Influenza

How You Can Prepare

Prepare for pandemic influenza . . .

In your community

Know your neighbors

- Talk with family, friends and neighbors to make sure everyone is prepared.

Know school policies

- Learn your school's policies about illnesses and being absent.

At work

Be ready for the possibility that you may not be able to go to work.

Know your workplace's policies concerning sick leave, absences and telecommuting.

Encourage planning. Every business, organization and agency should have a plan for making sure

essential work will get done if large numbers of employees are absent over many months.

Explore ways to get your work done that reduce personal contact. For example, increase use of e-mails or phone conferences.

At home

Make household and family emergency plans

- Agree on a point of contact where all family members can check in if you are separated during an emergency.
- Decide who will take care of children if schools are closed.
- Plan to limit the number of trips you take to shop or to run errands. Also, remember public transportation routes and times may be limited.
- Think about how you would care for people in your family who have disabilities if support services are not available.
- Be prepared to get by for at least a week on what you have at home. Stores may not be open or may have limited supplies.

Keep these items in your home

- Enough food and water per person for a week or more.
- Medications—At least a week's supply of those you take regularly.
- Items to relieve flu symptoms—Medicines such as Ibuprofen and Acetaminophen for fever, cold packs, blankets, extra water and fruit juice.
- Items for personal comfort—Soap, shampoo, toothpaste and toilet paper.
- Activities for yourself and your children.
- Cash.
- Pet supplies.
- Cell phone or regular phone with a cord—Cordless phones won't work if the power is out.
- Large trash bags.

Protect your health

Prevent the spread of germs

The flu virus is spread from person to person when an infected person coughs, sneezes or touches things that others use. Do these simple, effective things to help protect yourself and others:

- **Cover your mouth and nose** with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, or cough into your sleeve.
- **Wash your hands** often with soap and water.
- **Don't touch** your eyes, nose or mouth.
- **Stay home** when you're sick or have flu symptoms.

Home care

Learn basic care-giving.

Know how to care for someone with a fever, body aches and lung congestion.

Learn to recognize and treat dehydration.

Watch for weakness, fainting, dry mouth, dark concentrated urine, low blood pressure or a fast pulse when lying or sitting down. To prevent dehydration, it is very important for a person with the flu to drink a lot of water—up to 12 glasses a day.

More information about pandemic influenza

Washington State Department of Health:
www.doh.wa.gov/panflu/