

- Phases:
- Prevention
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- Audiences:
- Administrators**
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**Communication #5**  
**Memo: Information About Pandemic Influenza (Flu)**

TO:  
 FROM:  
 DATE:  
 SUBJECT: Information about Pandemic Influenza (Flu)

Pandemic influenza or pandemic flu is a worldwide outbreak of a new flu virus for which there is little or no immunity or protection in the human population. Scientists and health professionals are concerned that the flu virus that has been reported in birds – called avian flu - may develop into the next human pandemic. Pandemic influenza can spread easily from person-to-person, causing serious illness and death. As many as 1 in 4 people could get sick during a pandemic, with many of them seriously ill.

The *name of local public health agency* is working with other local, state and federal agencies to prepare for the possibility of pandemic flu. Communities, schools, and individuals also need to plan for pandemic flu and take action to be better prepared to respond to pandemic flu. The following information will help you understand what pandemic flu is and be better prepared.

**Questions and Answers about Pandemic Flu**

**What is the difference between seasonal and pandemic Flu?**

Influenza, also known as the flu, is a contagious respiratory disease caused by viruses. In the United States, there is a flu season that begins every fall and ends every spring. The type of flu people get during this season is called seasonal flu.

Sometimes, a new type of flu virus may emerge to which the general public has no resistance. The lack of immunity enables the virus to spread quickly and easily from person to person impacting communities around the world in a very short time, causing serious illness and death. This kind of flu is called pandemic flu.

**What are the symptoms of pandemic flu?**

The exact symptoms of pandemic flu are unknown until the pandemic occurs. However, the CDC notes that symptoms are expected to be similar to those of seasonal flu, which include:

- Fever
- Sore throat
- Cough
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Extreme fatigue

- Headache
- Muscle aches and pains
- Stomach problems, such as nausea, vomiting and diarrhea (more common in children)

Research suggests that it may take two to seven days to show symptoms when a person catches the flu, and the symptoms may last for up to a week.

A person infected with the flu may transmit the flu for one to two days before they have symptoms, and for five to seven days after symptoms begin.

### **Why the concern over pandemic flu?**

Pandemic flu is more serious than seasonal flu. Most people who get seasonal flu recover within a week or two and usually do not require medical treatment. Pandemic flu is different because more people who get it might not recover, even with medical treatment, and people of every age may be at risk of serious illness or death.

### **Who is more at risk?**

The very young, the very old and the very sick are most likely to become seriously ill from any form of the flu virus.

### **What about a vaccine?**

Unlike seasonal flu, there is no vaccine for pandemic flu until researchers and pharmaceutical companies are able to create one, which takes time. Even if a vaccine is developed for the pandemic flu, it will be a challenge to manufacture and dispense the vaccine to everyone in a timely manner.

### **When will this happen? Can I do something now?**

Scientists cannot accurately predict whether the avian influenza virus (H5N1) will cause the next human pandemic flu or when the next pandemic will occur.

The best way to protect yourself and others is to practice healthy hygiene to keep you well now and during a flu pandemic. Practicing these actions now will make them easier to do later. These actions include washing your hands, covering your cough, and staying home (or keeping your children home) when sick.

For further information, you can check the following Web site: *add local public health agency Web site*

***Distribute with Pandemic Influenza and Avian Flu Fact Sheets***