



Pandemic Flu Facts



What is it?

How can you protect yourself and your family?



WHAT IS PANDEMIC FLU?

A **pandemic** is a global disease outbreak.

Pandemic flu (influenza) is a global outbreak of flu that involves a new flu virus and causes serious human illness. The flu strain that causes the pandemic will spread quickly and easily from person to person because people are unlikely to have immunity against it.

Avian (bird) flu is a virus that occurs naturally among birds. It rarely causes illness in humans. Only recently has the H5N1 bird flu strain changed so that it is able to cause illness and death in humans. Scientists believe bird flu may be the cause of the next pandemic flu.

WILL THERE BE A VACCINE TO PREVENT PANDEMIC FLU?



Flu vaccines have to be made specifically for the type of flu virus circulating that year. Until the specific pandemic flu virus is identified, it is not possible to make the vaccine. A flu vaccine takes four to six months to produce, so a vaccine probably won't be available at the start of the pandemic. If a pandemic flu develops, a new vaccine will be produced as quickly as possible. Research for an effective vaccine against bird flu in humans is currently underway. Vaccine availability will be based on global vaccine manufacturing capacity and an increased demand.



ARE THERE ANY DRUGS TO TREAT PANDEMIC FLU?

Antiviral drugs may be available to lessen the severity and duration of symptoms due to pandemic flu. The United States is currently stockpiling antiviral medications for use during a pandemic. If the event of a pandemic they will be prescribed in the most effective way based on how the disease develops.

WHY ARE WE CONCERNED?

Most people will have no immunity to a pandemic virus, so illness and death rates are expected to be higher than during seasonal outbreaks of influenza. Scientists estimate that a large number or percentage of the world's population will require some form of medical care. Countries might, through measures such as border closures and travel restrictions, delay arrival of the virus, but cannot stop it. The three pandemics of the 1900's encircled the globe in six to nine months. Now, modern transportation may help the virus spread faster globally.



WHAT IS BEING DONE?



To reduce human exposure, poultry with avian flu are destroyed immediately.

Many governments have begun stockpiling antiviral medicines.

Surveillance systems to detect avian flu are being enhanced. The state of Illinois is able to rapidly test possible avian flu cases.

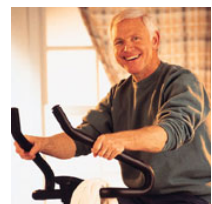
McHenry County Department of Health has plans in place to detect, monitor and treat people who may become ill during a pandemic flu event. There are also regional efforts in place to detect and monitor pandemic flu cases that may occur in Northern Illinois.

In addition, there have been mass distribution of medication practice drills and frequent training exercises to ensure local agencies are prepared.

HOW CAN I PROTECT MYSELF AND MY FAMILY AGAINST CATCHING THE FLU?

All flu viruses spread through the air when people cough or sneeze. Basic actions that may reduce the risk of getting or spreading flu are:

- Wash your hands frequently with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds.
- Use a 60% alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
- Cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze.
- Avoid large crowds whenever possible.
- DO NOT go to work when you are ill.
- DO NOT send an ill child to school or day care.
- Avoid close contact with those who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth at all times.
- Eat a healthy diet and get regular exercise.



MORE INFORMATION

If you would like more information, visit:

www.pandemicflu.gov

The official U.S. government website on pandemic flu and avian influenza. Information for individuals and family planning kits are available on this site.

www.cdc.gov/flu/pandemic

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

www.who.int

The World Health Organization

www.hhs.gov/pandemicflu/

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

www.idph.state.il.us

The Illinois Department of Public Health

www.mcdh.info

McHenry County Department of Health

