



Pandemic Flu FAQs

What is Pandemic Flu?

A flu pandemic occurs when a new influenza A virus emerges for which there is little or no immunity in the human population; the virus causes serious illness and spreads easily from person-to-person worldwide. The symptoms of pandemic flu would be similar to those of ordinary flu, but more severe.

What are the symptoms of Pandemic Flu?

The signs of seasonal flu are fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, muscle aches, headache, chills and fatigue. The signs of pandemic flu are the same, but they may be more severe and affect more people.

Will a vaccine be available to prevent Pandemic Flu?

The vaccine against ordinary flu will not protect against a pandemic flu virus. Flu vaccines have to be made specifically for the particular virus causing a pandemic. That is why the annual flu vaccine changes each year. The vaccine takes several months to produce. If a pandemic flu develops, a new vaccine will be produced as quickly as possible.

Will widespread illness occur if there is a Pandemic Flu?

Typically, pandemic flu strains spread rapidly because people have no natural immunity to protect against it. Because most people will have no immunity to a pandemic virus, infection and illness rates are expected to be higher than during seasonal outbreaks of normal influenza. Outbreaks usually occur in at least two waves that last two to three months, and are typically several months apart.

How can I protect myself from getting the flu and spreading it to others?

- Wash your hands often with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds. Use alcohol-based hand sanitizer when soap and water are not available.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth. The flu often spreads this way.
- Cough or sneeze into the bend of your arm, not your hands. If you have a tissue, cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue away, and then wash your hands.
- Stay away from others when you are sick. Stay home from work, school or running errands. Leave home only for medical care and wear a N95 facemask.

- Avoid close contact with those who are ill by staying at least six feet away.
- Never send an ill child to school or daycare.
- Clean surfaces such as countertops, sinks, faucets, doorknobs, telephones and light switches with a disinfectant cleaner or a cleaner with bleach. You can also mix your own water and bleach solution. Mix ten parts water with one part bleach.
- Get a full night's rest, eat a healthy diet, drink at least eight glasses of fluids each day, and exercise regularly.

Is there treatment for Pandemic Flu?

Antiviral drugs may be effective in treating pandemic flu. Antiviral drugs can make your illness milder and make you feel better faster. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is stockpiling these medications. In the event of a pandemic, they will be used in the most effective way based on how the disease develops.

Can a flu shot give you the flu?

No, a flu shot cannot cause flu illness. The influenza viruses contained in a flu shot are inactivated (killed), which means they cannot cause infection. Flu vaccine manufacturers kill the viruses used in the vaccine during the process of making vaccine, and batches of flu vaccine are tested to make sure they are safe. In randomized, blinded studies, where some people get flu shots and others get salt-water shots, the only differences in symptoms was increased soreness in the arm and redness at the injection site among people who got the flu shot. There were no differences in terms of body aches, fever, cough, runny nose or sore throat.

Who is most at risk during a Pandemic Flu?

The most vulnerable populations during a pandemic are the elderly, the chronically ill, the immune compromised, children, and pregnant women.

Is H1N1 still present?

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), although the World Health Organization (WHO) declared an end to the 2009 H1N1 flu pandemic, the H1N1 flu virus is still circulating, along with other seasonal flu viruses.