



Sample Newsletter Article

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; causes serious illness or death; and can move across the country and around the world in a very short time.

Health professionals are concerned the continued spread of H5N1 avian (bird) flu virus across many parts of the world presents a significant threat to human health. Since 2003, more than half the people who contracted the H5N1 virus from contact with infected birds have died. When this was written, the H5N1 virus has not mutated into a form easily transmitted between people.

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.

Pandemic influenza is much more serious than seasonal influenza and has occurred three times in the last century. Pandemics can occur any time, symptoms may be more severe and complications more frequent. Recent pandemics occurred in 1957-58 and 1968-69; but the most serious was the 1918 Spanish flu pandemic which killed perhaps as many as 30 to 50 million people worldwide. Local, state and federal governments are preparing for the worst-case scenario which would be similar to the 1918 pandemic.

Whether the H5N1 virus, or some other virus, will be the next source of pandemic influenza is unknown. The H5N1 virus will inevitably strike birds in North America, entering the continent via one of the transcontinental flyways. While this may cause some alarm for the human population, this eventuality is not a cause to panic. H5N1 is still primarily a bird disease.

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. 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.

STOCKPILING

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

In the absence of vaccine or antiviral medicines, 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.

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Note from Web site editor: sidebar messages for specific audiences and topics are also available for your use.