

Pandemic Influenza

Preparing for an outbreak

What is pandemic influenza?

Pandemic Influenza is a worldwide outbreak of a new strain of influenza virus. Because it will be a new virus, no one will have immunity (protection) against it. As it becomes easy to pass from person to person, it will spread rapidly from country to country.

How is pandemic influenza different from seasonal influenza?

Seasonal flu is caused by known flu viruses that we see every year. There are vaccines available for seasonal flu. Pandemic flu will be caused by a “new” type of flu virus – one that we have not seen before. Because there is no vaccine for pandemic flu, many people may die (perhaps thousands), and many more will become sick (probably millions). When the strain is identified, a vaccine can be made but it will take months to produce enough for large numbers of people.

What will happen if there is a pandemic?

We should prepare for the worst-case scenario. Health professionals have estimated that:

- up to 35% of the population could become sick with pandemic flu
- it may be difficult to get medical care because hospitals and clinics will be overwhelmed with so many people seeking care
- supplies of goods and services will be limited because many people will be too sick to work
- people may be asked to stay at home to help stop the spread of germs
- schools, churches, restaurants, theatres and other public places may be closed or have limited hours of operation
- medicines to treat flu symptoms may be in short supply
- people may be asked to wear masks, practice social distancing, or other preventive measures
- a pandemic may last for many months and come in waves as it passes around the world

Why should I prepare for a pandemic now?

Flu viruses are everywhere and they change constantly. Large flu pandemics occurred in 1918, 1957, and 1968. Public health workers are concerned about the avian flu virus (H5N1) that is circulating in Asia, Europe and Africa, because it could change and possibly begin to spread among people. By preparing now, we can be ready if an influenza pandemic were to happen.



NORTH HEALTH DISTRICT 2

1280 ATHENS STREET
GAINESVILLE, GA 30507
770-535-5743 • www.phdistrict2.org

Pandemic Influenza

Preparing for an outbreak

How can I prepare?

Get informed. Learn about influenza and how to care for your family if a pandemic should happen.

Prevent the spread of germs. Cover your mouth and nose when you sneeze or cough. Cough into your sleeve or cover with a tissue. Wash your hands with soap and water often. Wash for 20 seconds (the time it takes to sing the “happy birthday” song twice). Use an alcohol hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.

Avoid others when you are sick or when they are sick. Try using the telephone or email to communicate with those that are sick. Practice social distancing – keep several feet of space between you and another person if you notice that they are coughing or sneezing.

Gather essential medicines and items to care for the sick in your home. Make sure that you have one gallon of water per person per day for you and your family. Stock food items such as canned meats, fish, fruits, vegetables, and soups; dry cereal; protein or fruit bars; peanut butter; crackers; and juices. Maintain a 30 day supply of the medicines and medical supplies that you use regularly. In addition, stock medicines to relieve flu symptoms such as ibuprofen, acetaminophen, cough and cold medicines, and sports drinks.

You should also think about keeping a supply of personal hygiene products and cleaning supplies on hand. Store a month’s supply of soap, shampoo, toothpaste, toilet paper, tissue, and other items that you use. It is a good idea to also have plenty of disinfectant, bleach, and other cleaning supplies along with trash bags, paper towels, and related supplies.

Keep batteries on hand for flashlights, radios and other electronic devices. It is a good idea to have at least one corded phone in your home because cordless phones do not work if the power is out. Keep cell phone chargers handy.

Since banks could be closed you should also keep a small amount of cash on hand. Keep small bills and some change for convenience.

Make plans for all types of emergencies. Make emergency plans and discuss them with your family. Talk to everyone in your family to ensure that they know what to do in every situation that you plan for. Plan how to care for sick family members. Be prepared to get by on what you have at home. Make arrangements for school closings, business closings, and other services not being available.



NORTH HEALTH DISTRICT 2

1280 ATHENS STREET
GAINESVILLE, GA 30507
770-535-5743 • www.phdistrict2.org