

Texans Preparing for Pandemic Influenza

Pandemic Influenza - Get Informed. Be Prepared.

This guide is designed to help you understand the threat of a pandemic influenza outbreak in our country and your community. It describes common sense actions you can take now in preparing for a pandemic. Being prepared may help lower the impact of an influenza pandemic on you and your family.

What You Need to Know

An influenza (flu) pandemic is a worldwide outbreak of flu disease that occurs when a new type of influenza virus appears that people have not been exposed to before (or have not been exposed to in a long time). The pandemic virus can cause serious illness because people do not have immunity to the new virus. Pandemics are different from seasonal outbreaks of influenza that we see every year. Seasonal influenza is caused by influenza virus types to which people have already been exposed. Its impact on society is less severe than a pandemic, and influenza vaccines (flu shots and nasal-spray vaccine) are available to help prevent widespread illness from seasonal flu.

Influenza pandemics are different from many of the other major public health and health care threats facing our country and the world. A pandemic will last much longer than most flu outbreaks and may include "waves" of influenza activity that last 6-8 weeks separated by months. The number of health care workers and first responders able to work may be reduced. Public health officials will not know how severe a pandemic will be until it begins.

A Historical Perspective

In the last century there were three influenza pandemics. All of them were called pandemics because of their worldwide spread and because they were caused by a new influenza virus. The 1918 pandemic was especially severe.

- 1918-1919 Most severe, caused at least 675,000 U.S. deaths and up to 50 million deaths worldwide.
- 1957-1958 Moderately severe, caused at least 70,000 U.S. deaths and 1-2 million deaths worldwide.
- 1968-1969 Least severe, caused at least 34,000 U.S. deaths and 700,000 deaths worldwide.

Some Differences Between Seasonal Flu and Pandemic Flu

- Seasonal Flu:** Caused by influenza viruses that are similar to those already circulating among people.

Pandemic Flu: Caused by a new influenza virus that people have not been exposed to before. Likely to be more severe, affect more people, and cause more deaths than seasonal influenza because people will not have immunity to the new virus.
- Seasonal Flu:** Symptoms include fever, headache, tiredness, dry cough, sore throat, runny nose, and muscle pain. Deaths can be caused by complications such as pneumonia.

Pandemic Flu: Symptoms similar to the common flu but may be more severe and complications more serious.
- Seasonal Flu:** Healthy adults usually not at risk for serious complications (the very young, the elderly, and those with certain underlying health conditions at increased risk for serious complications).

Pandemic Flu: Healthy adults may be at increased risk for serious complications.
- Seasonal Flu:** Every year in the United States, on average:

 - 5% to 20% of the population gets the flu,
 - More than 200,000 people are hospitalized from flu complications; and
 - About 36,000 people die from flu.

Pandemic Flu: The effects of a severe pandemic could be much more damaging than those of a regular flu season. It could lead to high levels of illness, death, social disruption, economic loss. Everyday life could be disrupted because so many people in so many places become seriously ill at the same time. Impacts could range from school and business closings to the interruption of basic services such as public transportation and food delivery.

Importance and Benefits of Being Prepared

The effects of a pandemic can be lessened if you prepare ahead of time. Preparing for a disaster will help bring peace of mind and confidence to deal with a pandemic.

When a pandemic starts, everyone around the world could be at risk. The United States has been working closely with other countries and the World Health Organization (WHO) to strengthen systems to detect outbreaks of influenza that might cause a pandemic.

A pandemic is likely to touch every aspect of society, so we all must begin to prepare. Federal, state, tribal, and local governments are developing, improving, and testing their plans for an influenza pandemic. Businesses, schools, universities, and other faith-based and community organizations are also preparing plans.

As you begin your individual or family planning, you may want to review the Texas Department of State Health Services planning efforts <http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/swineflu/> and the federal link to the "Planning Checklist for Individuals and Families" at: <http://www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/individual/checklist.html> For reliable, accurate, and timely information, visit the federal government's official Web site at www.pandemicflu.gov.

Essential Services You Depend on May Be Disrupted

- Plan for the possibility that usual services may be disrupted. These could include services provided by hospitals and other healthcare facilities, banks, restaurants, government offices, telephone and cellular phone companies, and post offices.
- Stores may close or have limited supplies. The planning checklists can help you determine what items you should stockpile to help you manage without these services.
- Transportation services may be disrupted and you may not be able to rely on public transportation. Plan to take fewer trips and store essential supplies.
- Public gatherings, such as volunteer meetings and worship services, may be canceled. Prepare contact lists including conference calls, telephone chains, and email distribution lists, to access or distribute necessary information.
- Consider that the ability to travel, even by car if there are fuel shortages, may be limited.
- You should also talk to your family about where family members and loved ones will go in an emergency and how they will receive care, in case you cannot communicate with them.
- In a pandemic, there may be widespread illness that could result in the shutdown of local ATMs and banks. Keep a small amount of cash or traveler's checks in small denominations for easy use.

Food and Water Supplies May Be Interrupted and Limited

Food and water supplies may be interrupted so temporary shortages could occur. You may also be unable to get to a store. To prepare for this possibility you should store at least two weeks supply of non-perishable food and fresh water for emergencies.

Food

- Store two weeks of nonperishable food.
- Select foods that do not require refrigeration, preparation (including the use of water), or cooking.
- Insure infant formulas and any child's or older person's special nutritional needs are a part of your planning.

Water

- Store two weeks of water, 1 gallon of water per person per day. (2 quarts for drinking, 2 quarts for food preparation/sanitation), in clean plastic containers. Avoid using containers that will decompose or break, such as milk cartons or glass bottles.

Being Able to Work May Be Difficult or Impossible

- Ask your employer how business will continue during a pandemic.
- Discuss staggered shifts or working at home with your employer. Discuss telecommuting possibilities and needs, accessing remote networks, and using portable computers.
- Discuss possible flexibility in leave policies. Discuss with your employer how much leave you can take to care for yourself or a family member
- Plan for possible loss of income if you are unable to work or the company you work for temporarily closes.

For the Business Checklist visit:

<http://www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/business/businesschecklist.html>

Schools and Daycare Centers May Be Closed for an Extended Period of Time

Schools, and potentially public and private preschool, childcare, trade schools, and colleges and universities may be closed to limit the spread of flu in the community and to help prevent children from becoming sick. Other school-related activities and services could also be disrupted or cancelled including: clubs, sports/sporting events, music activities, and school meals. School closings would likely happen very early in a pandemic and could occur on short notice.

- Talk to your teachers, administrators, and parent-teacher organizations about your school's pandemic plan, and offer your help.
- Plan now for children staying at home for extended periods of time, as school closings may occur along with restrictions on public gatherings, such as at malls, movie theaters.
- Plan home learning activities and exercises that your children can do at home. Have learning materials, such as books, school supplies, and educational computer activities and movies on hand.
- Talk to teachers, administrators, and parent-teacher organizations about possible activities, lesson plans, and exercises that children can do at home if schools are closed. This could include continuing courses by TV or the internet.
- Plan entertainment and recreational activities that your children can do at home. Have materials, such as reading books, coloring books, and games, on hand for your children to use.

For the "Childcare, School, and University Checklist," visit:

<http://www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/tab5.html> (English, Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese)

Medical Care for People with Chronic Illness Could be Disrupted

In a severe pandemic, hospitals and doctors' offices may be overwhelmed.

- If you have a chronic disease, such as heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, asthma, or depression, you should continue taking medication as prescribed by your doctor.
- Make sure you have necessary medical supplies such as glucose, blood-pressure monitoring equipment and oxygen. Plan for emergency back-up power for any medical equipment that needs electricity to operate.
- Talk to your healthcare provider to ensure adequate access to your medications.
- If you receive ongoing medical care such as dialysis, chemotherapy, or other therapies, speak with your health care provider about plans to continue care during a pandemic.
- **A "Family Emergency Health Information Sheet"** is provided in this guide and at: <http://www.pandemicflu.gov/planguide/familyhealthinfo.html> (

Pandemic Influenza - Prevention and Treatment

Stay Healthy

These steps may help prevent the spread of respiratory illnesses such as the flu:

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze-throw the tissue away immediately after you use it.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. If you are not near water, use an alcohol-based (60-95%) hand cleaner.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick. When you are sick, keep a six foot distance from others to protect them from getting sick too.
- If you get the flu, stay home from work, school, and social gatherings. In this way you will help prevent others from catching your illness.
- Try not to touch your eyes, nose, or mouth. Germs often spread this way.

Stay Informed

- Knowing the facts is the best preparation. Identify sources you can count on for reliable information. In a pandemic, having accurate and reliable information is critical.
- Reliable, accurate, and timely information is available at www.pandemicflu.gov.
- Another source for information on pandemic influenza is the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Hotline at: **1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636)**. This line is available in English and Spanish, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Look for H1N1 information on the following Texas websites:

- TexasFlu.org (English and Spanish)
- [Interim Guidance for Reducing the Spread of Novel H1N1 and Seasonal Influenza in State Hospitals and State Supported Living Centers](#)
- [Interim Guidance for Reducing the Spread of Novel H1N1 and Seasonal Influenza during Public Gatherings and Guidance on the Cancellation of Public Events](#)
- [Ready America/Texas](#)
- TexasPrepares.org
- **[Governor's Division of Emergency Management](#)**
- [Texas Education Agency School Closings](#)
- [Texas Department of Criminal Justice](#) (English and Spanish)
- [Emergency Management Situation Reports](#)
- [AgriLife Texas A & M: Texas Extension and Disaster Education Network](#)
- [Texas Higher Education Coordination Board](#)
- [Interim Guidance for Clinicians on the Prevention and Treatment of Swine-Origin Influenza Virus Infection in Young Children](#) (4/29/09) (English and Spanish)
- [Local and Regional Health Departments](#) (English and Spanish)
- [H1N1 Influenza A \(Swine Flu\) Illness and Returning to Work and School](#) (5/05/09) (English and Spanish)

Federal H1N1 information:

- [Interim Guidance—Pregnant Women and Swine Influenza: Considerations for Clinicians](#) (English and Spanish)
- [Interim Guidance for Swine influenza A \(H1N1\): Taking Care of a Sick Person in Your Home](#) (English and Spanish)
- [Interim Guidance on Antiviral Recommendations for Patients with Confirmed or Suspected Swine Influenza A \(H1N1\) Virus Infection and Close Contacts](#) (English and Spanish)
- [Interim Recommendations for Facemask and Respirator Use in Certain Community Settings Where Swine Influenza A \(H1N1\) Virus Transmission Has Been Detected](#) (English and Spanish)
- [Swine Influenza A \(H1N1\) Virus Biosafety Guidelines for Laboratory Workers](#) (English and Spanish)
- [Interim Guidance for Infection Control for Care of Patients with Confirmed or Suspected Swine Influenza A \(H1N1\) Virus Infection in a Healthcare Setting](#) (English and Spanish)

- [Interim Guidance on Case Definitions to be Used For Investigations of Swine Influenza A \(H1N1\) Cases](#) (English and Spanish)
- [Interim Guidance to Assist Airline Flight Deck and Cabin Crew in Identifying Passengers Who May Have Swine Influenza](#) (English and Spanish)
- [CDC Updates Recommendations for the Amount of Time Persons with Influenza-Like Illness should be Away from Others](#)
- [Federal Pandemic Flu site](#) (English, Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese)
- [Centers for Disease Control](#) (English and Spanish)

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) hotline, 1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636), is available in English and Spanish, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
TTY: 1-888-232-6348

- Listen to local and national radio, watch news reports on television, and read your newspaper and other sources of printed and web-based information.
- Talk to your local health care providers and public health officials.

Other Resources:

- **No Ordinary Flu: Lessons for Preparing for Today: Preparedness Graphic Short Story in multiple languages.** Targeting readers of all ages, this story tells the tale of a family's experience of the 1918 influenza pandemic. It also explains the threat of pandemic flu today, illustrates what to expect during a pandemic (such as school closures), and offers tips to help households prepare.
<http://www.kingcounty.gov/healthservices/health/preparedness/pandemicflu/comicbook.aspx#pdf>
Available in English, Spanish, Arabic, Amharic, Chinese, Hmong, Khmer, Dorean, Laotian, Oromo, Russian, Somali, Tagalog, Ukrainian and Vietnamese.

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Printable Forms in various languages that are Helpful in a Pandemic:

- [Family Emergency Health Information Sheet](#) (English, Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese)
- [Emergency Contacts Form](#) (English, Spanish, Chinese Vietnamese)
- [Make Your Own Plan Designed for YOUR Family at TexasPrepares.org: Make Your Plan](#) (English and Spanish)

For More Information

- Questions can be emailed to inquiry@cdc.gov.
- Links to state departments of public health can be found at www.pandemicflu.gov/state/statecontacts.html.
- [More information on the Governor's web site.](#)
- [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#) (English, Spanish, French, Arabic, Russian, Chinese)

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website: <http://governor.state.tx.us/disabilities>