



PREPARING FOR A PANDEMIC:

What Parents Need to Know About Seasonal and Pandemic Flu



Kalamazoo County

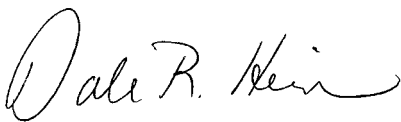
Health & Community Services

A MESSAGE FROM THE HEALTH OFFICER

An influenza, or flu, pandemic happens when a new flu virus appears that easily spreads from person-to-person and around the world. A pandemic flu would spread rapidly, and would affect all age groups. It would cause illness in a high proportion of those infected. The World Health Organization warns that a flu pandemic could infect between 25 and 30 percent of the world's population - three million people in the state of Michigan alone.

So what do you, as a parent, need to know about pandemic flu? It's important to know both the magnitude of how a pandemic outbreak may affect your day-to-day routine, and what actions you can take to help lessen the impact of an influenza pandemic on you and your family. Because a pandemic will happen almost everywhere at nearly the same time, few communities will have resources to spare. That's why it's so important for you to prepare your family for a pandemic event.

This guide will provide you with information about seasonal and pandemic flu, how to stop the spread of illness, and how to plan for a possible pandemic. By educating yourself and planning ahead, you can reduce the effects of a pandemic on your family...and our community.



Dale R. Hein, M.A., MSW

Director/Health Officer

Kalamazoo County Health & Community Services

SEASONAL FLU VS. PANDEMIC FLU:

What's the Difference?

	Seasonal Flu	Pandemic Flu
Description	Seasonal flu is caused by influenza viruses that are similar to those already affecting people. Flu shots are available every year to protect against seasonal flu.	Pandemic flu is caused by a new influenza virus that people have not been exposed to before. Flu shots might not be available during the beginning of the pandemic because large amounts of vaccine cannot be made until experts know what the virus looks like.
Symptoms	Symptoms include fever, cough, sore throat, headache, and muscle pain.	Symptoms will be similar to the regular flu, but may be more severe and complications could be more serious.
	<p>Healthy adults are usually not at risk for serious complications.</p> <p>The very young, the elderly, and people with serious health conditions are at increased risk for serious complications, such as pneumonia or even death.</p> <p>The more common flu that spreads each winter generally causes a modest impact on society, for example, some schools are closed and sick people are encouraged to stay home.</p>	<p>Healthy adults may face a higher risk for serious complications.</p> <p>It is not possible to prevent or stop a pandemic flu once it begins spreading. Infected people can spread the disease from one day prior to the onset of symptoms to about five days after onset. This makes it extremely easy for the virus to spread rapidly.</p> <p>A severe pandemic could change daily life for some time. People may choose to stay home or be forced to stay home if they are sick or need to care for others. Travel and public gatherings could be limited. Basic services and access to supplies could be disrupted.</p>

WHAT IS BIRD FLU?

Just like people, birds can get sick from flu viruses, but bird flu viruses rarely infect people. The bird flu that has been spreading quickly among wild birds and poultry in many countries is a very serious type of bird flu called H5N1. Currently, the H5N1 bird flu does not spread easily from person-to-person. Most of the human infections with bird flu in other parts of the world were caused by very close contact with infected birds. In the United States, poultry farms are very careful to prevent disease. Health experts are concerned that H5N1 could change into a virus that easily spreads from person-to-person. Scientists around the world are watching for changes in bird flu viruses because that could signal the beginning of a pandemic.

BE A FLU FIGHTER!

A pandemic strain of the flu is spread just like seasonal flu – through droplets from coughs and sneezes. You can take common-sense steps now to limit the spread of flu. Here's how:

- Teach your children to wash their hands with lots of soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Be sure to set a good example by doing this yourself.
- Teach your children to cover coughs and sneezes with tissues, or by coughing into the inside of the elbow. Again, be sure to set a good example by doing this yourself.
- Keep children who are sick at home. Don't send them to school, and keep them away from others until they are better.
- Keep all childhood vaccinations up-to-date, and make sure everyone in your household gets a flu shot each year. While the vaccine available for the ordinary flu will not protect you from a pandemic influenza virus, it will protect you from getting seasonal flu, which could weaken your immune system and your resistance to a pandemic influenza.
- If you smoke – quit. Smokers are more likely to get seasonal flu, and children exposed to secondhand smoke are more likely to have weakened immune systems and greater susceptibility to illness.

SLOWING THE SPREAD OF A PANDEMIC

It is not possible to prevent or stop a pandemic flu once it begins to spread. Infected people can spread the disease from one day prior to the onset of symptoms, to about five days after onset. This makes it extremely easy for the virus to spread rapidly. During a pandemic event, people may be asked or required to do things to help decrease the spread of the disease. Some examples:

STAY HOME

People who are sick should stay home. Children should not go to school if they are sick. Staying home will be especially important during a pandemic to limit the spread of the disease.

AVOID LARGE GROUPS

During a pandemic, people will need to stay away from places where others gather – such as sporting events, movies, and shopping malls. In fact, large events and facilities may be closed or cancelled to limit the spread of the flu virus.



Isolation and Quarantine are public health actions that are used to contain the spread of a contagious disease. If asked, it will be important for you to follow Isolation and/or Quarantine instructions.

ISOLATION

Isolation is for people who are already ill. When someone is isolated, they are separated from people who are healthy. Having the sick person isolated (separated from others) can help slow or stop the spread of the disease. People who are isolated can be cared for in their homes, in hospitals, or other healthcare facilities. Isolation is usually voluntary, but local, state and federal governments have the power to require the isolation of sick people to protect the public.

QUARANTINE

Quarantine is for people who have been exposed to the disease but who are not sick. When someone is placed in quarantine, they are also separated from others. Even though the person is not sick at the moment, they were exposed to the disease and may still become infectious and then spread the disease to others. Quarantine can help to slow or stop this from happening. States generally have the power to enforce quarantines within their borders.



PLANNING FOR A PANDEMIC

As you and your family plan for a flu pandemic, think about the challenges you might face. The services you depend on may be disrupted. Here are some things to consider:

- Plan for the possibility that usual services may be disrupted. These could include hospitals, clinics, banks, restaurants, government offices and post offices, and telephone and cell phone companies.
- Gatherings, such as volunteer meetings and worship services, may be canceled. Prepare contact lists including conference calls, telephone chains, and email lists.
- Consider that the ability to travel, even by car if there are fuel shortages, may be limited.
- Talk to your family about where family members will go in an emergency and how they will receive care in case you can't communicate with them.
- Widespread illness could result in the closing of ATMs and banks. Keep a small amount of cash or traveler's checks in small denominations for easy use.



PLANNING FOR SCHOOL CLOSINGS

Your child's school or childcare facility may be closed to limit the spread of pandemic flu. School closings may be a public health tool for containing disease early in a pandemic, and could occur on short notice. Take steps now to prepare for an extended home stay.

- Talk to teachers, administrators, and parent-teacher organizations about your school's pandemic plan, and offer to help with planning efforts.
- Plan now in case children must stay at home for extended periods. School closings may accompany restrictions on public gatherings, including malls and movie theaters.



- Plan activities 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.
- Store a supply of water and food. During a pandemic you may not be able to get to a store – or stores may be out of supplies – so it will be important for you to have extra supplies on hand.
- Maintain a two-week supply of nonperishable food that doesn't need refrigeration, preparation (including the use of water), or cooking. Include formula if you have an infant, and any other special nutritional needs.
- Store two weeks of water, one gallon of water per person per day (two quarts for drinking, two quarts for food preparation/sanitation), in plastic containers. Avoid containers that decompose or break, such as milk cartons or glass bottles.
- Have an extra supply of prescription drugs on hand for all family members. Make sure you also have a supply of nonprescription drugs and other health supplies, including pain relievers, stomach remedies, cough and cold medicines, fluids with electrolytes, and vitamins.





Is it the Flu?

The symptoms of influenza are:

- Fever – low (99 F) to high (104 F), usually for three days, but may persist for four to eight days. Some times fever will go away and return a day later.
- Aching muscles
- Cough
- Headache
- Joint aches
- Eye pain
- Feeling very cold or having shaking chills
- Feeling very tired
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose

IF YOUR CHILD DEVELOPS THESE SYMPTOMS...

- Keep them home from school!
- Encourage them to rest and drink plenty of fluids.
- Give fever reducers (acetaminophen or ibuprofen). Do not use aspirin in children or teenagers as it can cause Reye's syndrome, a life-threatening illness.
- Contact your healthcare provider for further advice.

When your child stays home sick, it is important to report the illness as accurately as possible to the school office. Kalamazoo County Health & Community Services monitors school illness reports to watch for trends. During a flu pandemic, keeping track of these numbers will help health officials determine when and whether to close schools, whether the outbreak is increasing in scope, and whether to declare an epidemic.

MORE INFORMATION

For more information on pandemic flu, visit the following websites or call the telephone numbers provided.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

www.pandemicflu.gov

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

www.cdc.gov

1.800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636)

inquiry@cdc.gov

Michigan Department of Community Health

www.michigan.gov/prepare

Kalamazoo County Health and Community Services

www.kalcounty.com/hcs

Main Switchboard: 269-373-5200

Emergency Hotline: 269-373-5300

The Kalamazoo County Health and Community Services Department has experts on staff who can answer your questions about pandemic flu and help you with your planning efforts. For more information, contact one of the individuals below.

Bob Hale

Emergency Preparedness Coordinator

Phone: 269-373-5061

Email: rahale@kalcounty.com

Linda Vail Buzas

Assistant Director

Phone: 269-373-5160

Email: lvbuza@kalcounty.com

Erin Campbell

Public Information Officer

Phone: 269-373-5226

Email: ekcamp@kalcounty.com

For additional copies of this publication, call 269-373-5226 or send an email to: pio@kalcounty.com.



Location: 3299 Gull Road
Kalamazoo, MI 49048

Mailing Address: PO Box 42
Nazareth, MI 49074-0042

Phone: 269-373-5200
Fax: 269-373-5363
Web: www.kalcounty.com/hcs

Kalamazoo County Health & Community Services Department programs are open to all without regard to race, color, national origin, sex, or disability.