

Fact Sheet



Preparing for Pandemic Influenza

An influenza (flu) pandemic is a worldwide outbreak of a new flu virus that can spread easily from person to person. Like the seasonal flu many people experience every year, pandemic flu will probably spread by infected people coughing or sneezing or by touching an infected surface. Unlike seasonal flu, people will have little immunity to the new flu virus that causes a pandemic and many more people will get sick. Right now, there is no immediate threat of a flu pandemic in Pennsylvania or the United States. However, Pennsylvania is taking an aggressive approach by preparing citizens now for the possibility of a pandemic flu outbreak in humans or animals.

What to expect

A flu pandemic could affect our daily lives in many ways and resources we typically rely on:

- ✓ Hospitals and doctors might be overwhelmed with sick patients.
- ✓ Schools and businesses might close to keep the virus from spreading or because too many people are ill.
- ✓ Essential supplies and services may become limited or unavailable.
- ✓ Travel and public gatherings might be limited to keep the virus from spreading.
- ✓ Public health officials may suggest using isolation or quarantine measures to control the spread of infection.
- ✓ There may not be a vaccine to protect people against the pandemic flu.
- ✓ Antiviral medicines may be in limited supply.
- ✓ If vaccines or antiviral medicines are available, people may be asked to go to a certain community location to get vaccinated or receive the medicine.
- ✓ The pandemic could last a long time. Sometimes, there are several waves of illness that occur over a series of months or even more than a year.

What to do

Every Pennsylvanian has an important role to play in preparing for a flu pandemic. There are simple things you can do. Many of these tips are useful for other emergency situations as well.

- ✓ Make an emergency supply kit for your home and a “to go” kit for your vehicle.
- ✓ Practice good hygiene.
- ✓ Wash your hands frequently. Use hand sanitizers that contain 60% alcohol when soap and water aren’t available.
- ✓ Cover your nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing.
- ✓ Regularly clean and disinfect surfaces that are touched by multiple people.
- ✓ Stay home from work or school when you are sick.
- ✓ Stay healthy by eating a balanced diet, getting regular exercise and getting sufficient rest.
- ✓ Get a yearly flu vaccination, especially if you are at high risk for flu complications.
- ✓ Discuss individual health concerns with your doctor.
- ✓ Plan to help your family, friends and neighbors, especially those who live alone or may need assistance in an emergency.
- ✓ Stay informed about pandemic flu and additional things you can do to prepare.

For more information, visit: www.readypa.org

Additional resources: www.pandemicflu.state.pa.us, www.pema.state.pa.us, www.homelandsecurity.state.pa.us,
www.ready.gov or www.health.state.pa.us