

Pandemics

Influenza and other diseases become a pandemic when they are rapidly spread from person to person, and eventually throughout the world. During a pandemic, sources of food, water, and healthcare may be limited because of overcrowding and sick medics. The best way to stay healthy during a pandemic is to prepare you and your family.



Before a Pandemic

- Store a two week supply of water and food.
- Periodically check your regular prescription drugs to ensure a continuous supply in your home.
- Have any nonprescription drugs and other health supplies on hand, including pain relievers, stomach remedies, cough and cold medicines, fluids with electrolytes, and vitamins.
- Talk with family members and loved ones about how they would be cared for if they got sick, or what will be needed to care for them in your home.
- Volunteer with local groups to prepare and assist with emergency response.
- Get involved in your community as it works to prepare for an influenza pandemic.
- Eat a balanced diet. Be sure to eat a variety of foods, including plenty of vegetables, fruits, and whole grain products. Also include low-fat dairy products, lean meats, poultry fish and beans.
- Drink plenty of water and go easy on salt, sugar, alcohol, and saturated fat.
- Follow other precautions below to prevent catching a disease.

During a Pandemic

- Wash hands frequently with soap and water, and model the correct behavior to others.
- Cover coughs and sneezes with tissues, and put used tissues in a wastebasket.
- Cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve if you do not have a tissue.
- Stay away from others as much as possible if they are sick.
- Stay home from work and school if you are sick.
- If recommended by your local health department, purchase a white face mask to wear in public areas.

When to Get Medical Help

- For children, seek urgent medical attention when there is:
 - Fast breathing or trouble breathing.
 - Bluish or gray skin color.
 - Not drinking enough fluids.
 - Severe or persistent vomiting.
 - Not waking up or not interacting.
 - Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held.
 - Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough.

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- For adults, seek urgent medical attention when there is:
 - Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath.
 - Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen.
 - Sudden dizziness
 - Confusion.
 - Severe or persistent vomiting.
 - Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough.

How to Care for Sick Ones at Home

- Those who are sick at home should:
 - Check with their health care provider about any special care they might need if they are pregnant or have a health condition such as diabetes, heart disease, asthma, or emphysema.
 - Check with their health care provider about whether they should take antiviral medications.
 - Stay home for 7 days after your symptoms begin or until you have been symptom-free for 24 hours, whichever is longer.
 - Get plenty of rest.
 - Drink clear fluids (such as water, broth, sports drinks, electrolyte beverages for infants) to keep from being dehydrated.
 - Cover coughs and sneezes. Clean hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub often and especially after using tissues and after coughing or sneezing into hands.
 - Avoid close contact with others – do not go to work or school while ill.
 - Be watchful for emergency warning signs (see above) that might indicate you need to seek medical attention.
- Those who are caring for individuals should:
 - Keep the sick person away from other people as much as possible.
 - Remind the sick person to cover their coughs, and clean their hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based rub often, especially after coughing and/or sneezing.
 - Have everyone in the household clean their hands often, using soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub.
 - Ask your healthcare provider if household contacts if the sick person—especially those who may have chronic conditions—should take antiviral medications such as oseltamivir (Tamiflu®) or zanamivir (Relenza®) to prevent the flu.