

Preparing For Pandemic Flu

Health experts and governments around the world are worried that the flu virus H5N1 affecting birds (avian influenza or bird flu) could change into a virus that easily affects people. If this happens, and the new virus enters California, many of us could become very sick, very fast.

When a new flu virus infects many people around the world, it is called an influenza pandemic.

Here are a few simple things you can do now to prepare for a pandemic. If the situation changes, these recommendations may also change.

1. Stay informed:

- Listen to information on the radio or television from a news source that you trust.
- Visit web sites that are reputable, such as www.pandemicflu.gov
- Read information from your local health department and other reliable sources.

2. Have a plan if you and your family have to stay at home for several weeks during a pandemic.

- Talk to your family and friends about their plans.
- Your plan needs to include who could help you with food and supplies if you and your family are ill. One way of doing this is by having a telephone network for you and the people who live close by.
- Talk with your neighbors about helping each other in case of a pandemic.

3. Keep a list of emergency services numbers handy.

Write down family contact information. Keep a copy by the phone and in each family member's wallet.

4. Add to your current emergency supplies kit (We should all have one for disasters such as floods)

- a. Have a supply of food and drinks to last for at least two weeks. Choose non-perishable foods like canned foods, soup packets and dried foods.
- b. Add acetaminophen or ibuprofen for all the family to help relieve aches and pains, and high temperatures. Remember not to give aspirin to children under 12.
- c. If you have prescription medicines (eg, for blood pressure), do not wait until you run out to get more. Have a two-week supply available in your emergency kit.
- d. Rotate food, drinks, acetaminophen, ibuprofen and prescription medications so that they do not expire while stored in your emergency kit.
- e. Add a thermometer.
- f. Have tissues (or toilet paper) and plastic bags – supermarket bags are good – to put the used tissues into.



- g. Masks may be useful, these could be standard surgical masks from a pharmacy or the sort you get in a hardware store to protect yourself when sanding or using solvents. Clear advice on how best to use any masks safely and appropriately will be given at the beginning of a future pandemic. For example, you might be advised to wear a mask if you get sick at work and need to travel home via public places. Masks should only be worn for short periods. They must be changed if they get wet from sneezing or coughing.
- h. Plastic gloves to use when caring for someone who is sick at home.
- i. Cleaning and disinfecting supplies.
- j. Think about things to do if you and your family have to stay home for a couple of weeks (books, games and videos).

5. Take care of your health

- Wash your hands frequently.
- Cover your mouth and nose when you cough, and insist that others do so also.
- Use tissues to cover your cough/sneeze or cough/sneeze into your sleeve.
- Stay home when you are sick and stay away from others until you feel better.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Get vaccinated against seasonal influenza.

6. Have a plan for work and school.

- How will you get to work if transportation is disrupted?
- Who will care for your children if schools are closed? Find out what the school would do in case of a pandemic.
- Discuss with your boss what plans are being developed at work to continue the business and to protect you and your co-workers.

7. Be prepared to take care of someone who is sick at home.

- The sick person should stay in a room different from that of the healthy people. They should have no visitors other than those who are caring for them, and they may have to wear a mask when in the presence of others.
- Wash hands frequently, especially after having contact with others, and before eating and after using the bathroom.
- Keep the household clean. Every day wipe down commonly shared surfaces such as refrigerator handles, microwaves, toilet seats and handles, phones, etc with a 10% solution of household bleach or cleaning sprays such as Lysol.
- Make tissues available in all rooms in the house, to cover your mouth when you cough.

