

PANDEMIC FLU PLANNING



Are You Ready?

Is a series of handouts designed to assist you and your family to plan ahead for emergencies.



For more information on **Pandemic Flu Planning Check** out these **Helpful websites:**

www.washhealth.org



Washington County
Emergency Services/
Emergency Management
33 W. Washington St.
Hagerstown, MD 21740
240-313-2930



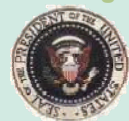
www.pandemicflu.gov



www.redcross.org



www.hhs.gov



www.whitehouse.gov



Are You Ready?

AUGUST 2006

WASHINGTON COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Pandemic Flu Planning Pandemic Influenza—Get Informed. Be Prepared.

This flyer is designed to help you understand the threat of a pandemic influenza outbreak in our country and your community. It describes commonsense actions you can take now in preparing for a pandemic. We cannot predict how severe the next pandemic will be or when it will occur, but 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 vaccines) 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.

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 would touch every aspect of society, so every part of society must begin to prepare. All have roles in the event of a pandemic. 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.

Be Prepared

Stock a supply of water and food. During a pandemic you may not be able to get to a store. Even if you can get to a store, it may be out of supplies. Public waterworks services may also be interrupted. Stocking supplies can be useful in other types of emergencies, such as power outages and disasters. Store foods that:

- ★ Are nonperishable (will keep for a long time) and don't require refrigeration
- ★ Are easy to prepare in case you are unable to cook
- ★ Require little or no water, so you can conserve water for drinking

Make a checklist of items to have on hand for an extended stay at home.

Stay Healthy

Take commonsense steps to limit the spread of germs. Make good hygiene a habit.

- ★ Wash hands frequently with soap and water.
- ★ Stay at home if you are sick.

- ★ Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.
- ★ Put used tissues in a waste basket.
- ★ Cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve if you don't have a tissue.
- ★ Clean your hands after coughing or sneezing. Use soap and water or an alcohol-based hand cleaner.

It is always a good idea to practice good health habits.

- ★ 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 lots of water and go easy on salt, sugar, alcohol, and saturated fat.
- ★ Exercise on a regular basis and get plenty of rest.

Get Informed

Knowing the facts is the best preparation. Identify sources you can count on for reliable information. If a pandemic occurs, having accurate and reliable information will be 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).
- ★ Look for information on your local www.washhealth.org and state government Web sites. Links are available to each state department of public health at www.cdc.gov/other.htm#states.
- ★ 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.

As you begin your individual or family planning, you may want to review your state's planning efforts and those of your local public health and emergency preparedness officials. Many of the state plans and other planning information can be found at pandemicflu.gov/plan/tab2.html.