



# **HOUSTON COUNTY SCHOOL SYSTEM PANDEMIC INFLUENZA RESPONSE PLAN**

**"When it comes to preparing our school community... there are three key steps to take: One, talk to your local health officials and work together to develop a plan. Then secondly, train your teachers and administrators to implement the plan. And finally, teach students and parents so they understand what to do in the event of a pandemic."**

*— Secretary Margaret Spellings, March 2006*



# Houston County School System Pandemic Influenza Response Plan

## Preparedness and Response Principles

In the event of a flu pandemic, the Houston County School System (HCSS), Georgia Department of Health and Human Services, the Central Georgia Health District and Houston County Department of Public Health will enact their Pandemic Influenza Response Plans to accomplish the following:

- Reduce the total number of illnesses and deaths; and
- Limit school disruption.

Our Houston County School System Pandemic Influenza Response Plan will be enacted and coordinated with the Department of Health and Human Services, the Houston County Department of Public Health and other local, federal and state agencies as deemed necessary.

## Authority

Within Houston County, the Superintendent of Schools will work in conjunction with the Houston County Department of Public Health and District Public Health officials to decide on the appropriate time to initiate social distancing by closing schools or facilities as deemed necessary. Steps will be taken to ensure that communication is clear and consistent.

The Superintendent of Schools will:

- consult with the Houston Emergency Management Agency (HEMA) Director;
- receive attendance information and health surveillance reports from the HCBOE lead nurse;
- approve all communication;
- address alternatives for staggering school times, changes in busing and telecommunication;
- work with Human Resources regarding schools functioning with a reduced work force;
- determine school closures;
- consult with the Georgia Department of Education regarding alternative learning strategies to provide ongoing education, such as collaborative agreements, instruction via radio/television, teleconferencing, lessons on CDs, e-mailed/mailed lessons and assignments, Web postings of homework, video lessons online, etc.;
- work with HEMA to determine any use of school resources as needed to assist the community, e.g. schools as contingency hospitals, providing food source for vulnerable populations, utilizing our healthcare and mental health staff, etc.; and
- mobilize the Crisis Recovery Team for reopening of schools.

## **Planning Assumptions**

The HCSS plan was produced with the following assumptions as delineated by the United States Health and Human Services Pandemic Influenza Plan:

- The clinical attack rate may be 30% or higher in the general population, with infection rates in children reaching 40% and declining with age.
- Children will likely shed the largest amount of virus and hence pose the greatest risk for transmission.
- The school district will need to prepare for a 30% reduction of the workforce.
- A pandemic may continue for four to 12 weeks with subsequent waves possible.
- Coordination of local, state and federal agencies will be paramount.
- The general public and key partners in the community will need continual and accurate updates.
- Social distancing measures may need to be enacted to reduce the transmission and progression of the disease.
- A person who is infected does not show symptoms right away. Children who are getting ill, though, may show different behavior than usual, such as eating less or being irritable.
- It cannot be determined in advance if schools will be closed, as all pandemics vary in their level of severity. Infectious diseases, however, are likely to occur in the school setting, making school closure a possibility. Although the determination of a school closing can only be made at the time of the event, it is possible that schools could be closed as long as 12 weeks.
- State, county and local agencies will work together to determine what is in the best interest of the schools and community.
- Multiple, simultaneous outbreaks may occur throughout the world and within our own state and community.
- There will be local surveillance of pandemic influenza symptoms, infection rates and absenteeism.
- Antiviral medication will be in short supply resulting in prioritization of its distribution.
- Influenza vaccines will not be available until six to eight months after the outbreak begins.
- Public and private services may be disrupted.
- Student absenteeism policies shall follow the Houston County BOE attendance policy.
- Student absences that appear to be part of contagious illness cluster shall be reported to the Pandemic Response Team via the Health Related Services office.

## Pandemic Influenza Response Plan

This Pandemic Influenza Response Plan provides information to school personnel and parents in the event of a pandemic influenza outbreak within our county, region or state. School system stakeholders explored issues concerning the use of personal protective equipment, alternate care facilities, general school environment, personal hygiene, and parental and community education and notification of the potential dangers of this communicable disease. A Pandemic Flu Strategy Committee will convene as needed at the request of the Superintendent. This committee consists of the superintendent, assistant superintendents, executive directors, directors and lead nurse.

Infection prevention is an ongoing process with interventions in place to address the spread of infection. The following is a list of important actions the Houston County Board of Education Health Related Services Department has taken to prepare for a pandemic influenza outbreak.

- Created a pandemic flu plan using the CDC School Pandemic Flu Planning Checklist.
- Working with local health and emergency preparedness officials- a local task force named the Houston County Pandemic Influenza Planning Committee (HCPIPC) meets periodically. The schools will serve as a way to disseminate information to families.
- Provided professional development sessions for nurses, school health technicians and school administrators in flu-symptom recognition.
- Created influenza awareness and information fact sheets to:
  - **Ensure that standard surveillance/disease recognition procedures** are in place and implemented.
  - **Improve the hygiene of students and staff.** Use simple non-medical ways to reduce the spread of flu by “cough and sneeze etiquette,” clean hands and clean work areas. Infection prevention supplies are provided to every classroom and office to help protect employees and students.
  - **Educate staff, students and parents** about the differences between seasonal flu, bird flu and pandemic flu; best hygienic practices to prevent any sort of flu; and what could occur in a pandemic.

## Identifying and Managing Illness of Students and Staff

Guidelines are in place to establish to what extent the school system will encourage or require children and staff to stay home when they are ill. The HCBOE provides appropriate sick leave allowances for employees and an attendance policy for students.

Students and staff identified who are exhibiting flu-like symptoms and those who are most vulnerable to serious illness (immune compromised, chronic illness, etc.) will be identified. Parents will be notified of contagious trends so that they may make informed decisions about their child's school attendance during an increase of contagious illness.

### Identification Methods

- **Immunization records are reviewed** and a copy of each student immunization certificate is maintained in the school health technician's office. A list of medically fragile, medically exempt and religious exempted students is maintained and kept current in the event of an outbreak of a contagious disease.
- **The health needs of students are reviewed weekly.** Some students have a greater risk of infections. Each Houston County school maintains a Student Medical Alert List. Each list is divided into three categories: red for those students with severe or life threatening conditions requiring potential emergent intervention; yellow for those with moderate conditions requiring interventions at school; and green for those with mild conditions or a history of medical concerns.
- **Encourage families who have children with special needs to talk to their health care provider.** Some parents may need to be more cautious in keeping their children out of school. Attendance/truancy issues will take into consideration the individual needs of the student.
- **Communicate directly to faculty and staff members** who are high-risk, i.e. pregnant, immune-compromised or those who have a chronic health condition.

### School Surveillance and Reporting

During all stages of a pandemic flu outbreak, and before such an event in our school community, it is essential to monitor and document the number of students and staff who are absent and, in particular, those whose symptoms meet the definition of influenza-like illness. Keeping track of these numbers will help health officials determine when and whether to close schools and to track the progress of the disease in the broader community.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention defines an influenza-like illness as having the following symptoms:

- Fever of 101.5 degrees Fahrenheit or higher *and* one of the following:
  - Cough
  - Sore throat
  - Headache
  - Muscle ache

## Surveillance

(1) **Daily Influenza Census.** This document details the specific information that each school would maintain and report to the lead nurse. The lead nurse for the Health Related Services Department of Student Services would report to the local public health department on a daily basis whenever a trend develops.

(2) **Weekly Influenza Census:** This document details the specific information that the local public health department should receive from a school/district on a weekly basis from the lead nurse whenever an influenza trend develops.

## Daily Influenza Census Reporting

Once pandemic flu has been confirmed in Georgia, in the middle Georgia region or neighboring states, Houston County schools may use this form to report daily to the Health Related Services, Nursing Department. The lead nurse will provide all pertinent information to the Houston County Public Health Department.

### Directions:

1. The Health Related Services, Nursing Department will instruct the school health technicians, or other responsible school officials, to begin daily surveillance.
2. The information will be forwarded to the health related services office secretary and lead nurse by the end of the school day.
3. The lead nurse and school nurses will compile the information and report all trends to the Superintendent of Schools and Houston County Public Health Department.

## Daily Influenza School Census Reporting Form

Name of School \_\_\_\_\_ Today's Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Elementary \_\_\_\_\_ Middle \_\_\_\_\_ Secondary \_\_\_\_\_

Reporting Individual: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

### Students

Number of students absent with flu-like illness today \_\_\_\_\_

Total number of students enrolled in your school \_\_\_\_\_

### Staff/Faculty

Number of staff/faculty absent with flu-like illness today \_\_\_\_\_

Total number of staff/faculty employed in your school \_\_\_\_\_

Assistance Needed/Comments:

## Weekly School Influenza Census Reporting

Once pandemic flu has been confirmed in Georgia, in the middle Georgia region or neighboring states, individual schools may use this form to report weekly to the Health Related Service's Nursing Department.

### Directions:

1. The Health Related Service's Nursing Department will instruct the school health technicians, or other responsible school officials to maintain weekly surveillance.
2. The information will be forwarded to the health related services office secretary and lead nurse by the end of the school week, each Friday.
3. The lead nurse and school nurses will compile the information and report all trends to the Superintendent of Schools and Houston County Public Health Department.

## Weekly Influenza School Census Reporting

Name of School \_\_\_\_\_ Today's Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Elementary \_\_\_\_\_ Middle \_\_\_\_\_ Secondary \_\_\_\_\_

Reporting Individual: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

### Students

Number of students absent with flu-like illness this week \_\_\_\_\_

Total number of students enrolled in your school \_\_\_\_\_

### Staff/Faculty

Number of staff/faculty absent with flu-like illness this week \_\_\_\_\_

Total number of staff/faculty employed in your school \_\_\_\_\_

## **Notification Sample Letters**

In the case of a pandemic, any decision for an emergency school closing shall be made by the local Superintendent of Schools after consultation with or at the direction of the local health department, emergency management agency and/or Georgia Department of Education.

**Letters to parents concerning a pandemic shall only be authorized and signed by the Superintendent of Schools.**

### **SAMPLE LETTER**

#### **Preparation and Planning for Pandemic Influenza**

*To be used if a pandemic outbreak is reported by the WHO (World Health Organization)*

Dear Parents:

This letter will help your family prepare for a flu pandemic that could make many people sick. It is important to know that at this time, there is no pandemic flu of any kind in the United States. There is also no bird/avian flu in the United States at this time.

Public health officials are worried the bird/avian flu virus may change so that it could infect people and spread easily from person-to-person. This would cause a worldwide flu outbreak, called a pandemic. Public health officials want people to protect themselves against pandemic flu.

Here are some ways to protect your family:

- Keep children who are sick at home. Do not send them to school.
- Teach your children to wash their hands often with a lot of soap and water for 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 their elbow. Be sure to set a good example by doing this yourself.
- Teach your children to stay at least three feet away from people who are sick.
- People who are sick should stay home from work or school and avoid other people until they are better.

Enclosed with this letter is a checklist to help families get ready for a pandemic flu outbreak. This information can also help your family get ready for any kind of emergency.

By working together, we can help keep our community a healthier place to live and learn. If you have questions, please contact your healthcare provider, school nurse or local public health department.

Sincerely,

Superintendent of Schools

## Sample Key Messages

**The following sample key messages for school officials are notifications which may be used in the event of schools remaining open or school closure. For example, this message could be used for the Crisis Communication telephone calling system and modified for the media.**

### **Sample Key Message: Schools Remain Open**

This is Superintendent of Schools David Carpenter. With this pandemic flu, we know that this is an anxious time for our community. Our thoughts are with all of our families and children who are affected by this illness. I want to assure you that we are working closely with local health officials to deal with the situation. We will keep you, our parents, updated with any important information.

At this time, under the guidance of the county health department, we believe students can safely attend classes. Our schools will remain open. If the pandemic flu continues to spread and more students become ill, health officials may need to close schools for an extended period of time. We will let you know as soon as possible if this situation arises. The purpose of closing schools would be to decrease contact among children in order to decrease their risk of getting sick and to limit the spread of infection. We urge parents to plan now for the *possibility* of schools closing.

Parents can help protect their children and prevent the spread of pandemic flu as they would colds and other flu by taking the following precautions:

- Teach your children to wash hands frequently with soap and water for 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.
- Teach your children to stay away from people who are sick and stay home from work or school if you are sick.

Recommendations may change during the course of a flu pandemic. If so, we will contact you using this telephone calling system. You may also access our school system's Web site at [www.hcbe.net](http://www.hcbe.net) for updates. Also, tune in to the HCBOE TV, either channel 17 on Cox or channel 10 on ComSouth. Public announcements will be made through the media.

For more information on pandemic flu and prevention, please contact your local public health officials.

## **Sample Key Message: School Closures**

This is Superintendent of Schools David Carpenter. Public health officials have ordered the closure of schools in Houston County as a result of the pandemic flu outbreak in our community. Schools may be closed for an extended period of time.

We know this is a difficult time for our community and our hearts go out to those who are ill. We are working closely with health officials to deal with the situation and will keep parents updated with any important information.

Because pandemic flu is easily spread from person-to-person, it is unsafe for large groups of people to gather and children should stay home. The purpose of closing schools is to decrease contact among children in order to decrease their risk of getting sick and to limit the spread of infection.

During this time, children and adults should stay away from other people and groups, as much as possible. Health officials also advise people should not gather in other locations such as homes, shopping malls, movie theaters or community centers.

Parents, you can help protect your children and prevent the spread of pandemic flu as you would colds and other flu by taking the following precautions:

- Teach your children to wash hands frequently with soap and water for 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.
- Teach your children to stay at least three feet away from people who are sick and stay home from work or school if you are sick.
- Keep a current list of all medications and the dosages each family member takes.
- Keep a current list of allergies for each family member.
- Have at least a two (2)-week supply of medication on hand.
- Make a list of emergency contacts.

Recommendations may change during the course of a flu pandemic. If so, we will contact you using this telephone calling system. You may also access our school system's Web site at [www.hcbe.net](http://www.hcbe.net) for updates. Also, tune in to the HCBOE TV, either channel 17 on Cox or channel 10 on ComSouth. Public announcements will be made through the media.

I will contact you again as soon as the situation changes or to update you with any important information.

## **Sample New Release**

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: MONTH, DAY, YEAR**

*Contact: Beth McLaughlin, Director of Community & School Affairs, (478) 988-6390 ext. 10390,  
BMcLaughlin@hcbe.net*

## **Houston County Schools Plan for Pandemic Flu**

HOUSTON COUNTY, GA – The Houston County School System has taken steps to plan and prepare for a pandemic influenza outbreak. While there is no pandemic flu of any kind in the United States at this time, public health experts do believe that there will be an outbreak at some point and they are encouraging proactive measures for local, state and federal agencies as well as individuals.

The school system has created a formal Pandemic Influenza Response Plan that details how it will handle potential outbreaks within the county, region or state. The Houston County Board of Education has also been working with a local task force, the Houston County Pandemic Influenza Planning Committee (HCPIPC), periodically.

In the event of a pandemic flu, information will be disseminated to families through the school system. Parents could expect updates through the system's crisis communication calling system, Web site, HCBOE television (Cox channel 17 and ComSouth channel 10). Information would also be distributed through fact sheets, letters and news releases to the media.

During all stages of a pandemic flu outbreak, the number of students and staff who are absent with influenza-like illness would be monitored and documented. These numbers would be reported to the Houston County Public Health Department to provide guidance in deciding if schools should remain open or close for an extended period. Schools would be closed to decrease contact among children in order to decrease their risk of getting sick and to limit the spread of infection.

Pandemic influenza planning suggestions for the general public include:

- Teach your children to wash hands frequently with soap and water for 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.
- Teach your children to stay at least three feet away from people who are sick and stay home from work or school if you are sick.
- Keep a current list of all medications and the dosages each family member takes.
- Keep a current list of allergies for each family member.
- Have at least a two (2)-week supply of medication on hand.
- Make a list of emergency contacts.

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## **Sample Memo to School Staff**

**This is a sample memo from the Superintendent to staff members during the planning phase, to communicate efforts to prepare for a possible pandemic outbreak and the response to be taken by the Houston County Board of Education.**

To: All Employees  
From: Superintendent David Carpenter  
Date:  
Subject: Pandemic Influenza Information

Often we hear about avian (bird) flu and how it is spreading to countries around the world. While the avian flu is not yet in the United States, scientists expect it to arrive at some point in the future. The strain of avian flu that has most concerned scientists recently - H5N1 - is not easily transmitted from person to person. Birds, however, are extremely susceptible to the virus. Scientists and public health professionals are concerned the avian flu virus may mutate so it can infect people and spread easily among humans. This would cause a worldwide flu outbreak, called a pandemic.

While our hope is that a pandemic will not occur, I want you to be aware that our Houston County School System is taking a proactive approach in addressing pandemic influenza issues for our schools. This includes the development of a written Pandemic Influenza Action Plan.

We are working closely with local health officials to share the most up-to-date information as it becomes available. Our schools have been provided with infection control information and learning opportunities to be proactive in our overall classroom infection control practices.

This effort is coordinated with other community agencies involved in pandemic influenza planning. Our lead nurse and her medical staff will continue to monitor the situation so that we are able to efficiently respond to any changes. We will provide you with periodic updates. Your participation in all our health and safety initiatives is vital to their success. Lastly, the health of our staff is extremely important, so please review the attached documents. Thank you for helping keep our community a healthy place to learn and live.

## **Fact Sheets and Handouts**

Several fact sheets have been provided to our faculty and staff. Information is also available to share with parents. The fact sheets include:

- Keeping Your Classroom Healthy
- How to Stop the Spread of Germs
- Protecting Students and Teachers
- Managing Flu Symptoms at Home
- How Does Seasonal Flu Differ From Pandemic Flu?
- Flu Season: Keep Your Cupboards Full
- Pandemic Flu Checklist for Individuals and Families (CDC)

Additional resource materials will be distributed throughout the seasonal flu season from the school system's Health Related Services office.



## **Keeping Your Classroom Healthy**

### **Common Flu Symptoms**

During all stages of a pandemic flu outbreak, it will be essential to monitor and document the number of students and staff who are absent with influenza-like illness. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), influenza symptoms usually start suddenly and may include the following:

- Fever (usually high)
- Headache
- Tiredness (can be extreme)
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Body aches
- Diarrhea and vomiting (more common among children than adults)

A student with influenza-like illness symptoms must be evaluated for fever. If a student has a temperature of 100° F or greater and is experiencing influenza-like illness symptoms (as described above), he/she should be excluded from school until free of symptoms.

Please note that not all symptoms are present in all persons; however, gastrointestinal (stomach) upsets without the above symptoms should not be considered influenza.

### **How Germs Spread**

The main way that illnesses like colds and flu are spread is from person to person in respiratory droplets of coughs and sneezes. This is called "droplet spread." This can happen when droplets from a cough or sneeze of an infected person move through the air and are deposited on the mouth or nose of people nearby.

Sometimes germs also can be spread when a person touches respiratory droplets from another person on a surface like a desk and then touches his or her own eyes, mouth or nose before washing their hands. We know that some viruses and bacteria can live two hours or longer on surfaces like cafeteria tables, doorknobs, and desks.



## **How to Stop the Spread of Germs**

Encourage everyone to take the following precautions seriously and to practice them daily:

- cover your mouth when sneezing or coughing;
- clean your hands often; and
- remind your children to practice healthy habits.

### **Cover your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing.**

Cough or sneeze into a tissue and then throw it away. Cover your cough or sneeze if you do not have a tissue. Provide students with a small paper bag to place used tissues in while at their desk. Discourage students from placing tissues back on their desk or in their pocket. Then, instruct the student clean his/her hands, and do so every time one coughs or sneezes.

### **The "Happy Birthday" song helps keep your hands clean.**

Public health officials recommend that when you wash your hands—with soap and warm water—that you wash for 15 to 20 seconds. That's about the same time it takes to sing the "Happy Birthday" song twice!

### **Alcohol-based hand wipes and gel sanitizers work.**

When soap and water are not available, alcohol-based disposable hand wipes or gel sanitizers may be used. You can find them in most supermarkets and drugstores. If using gel, rub your hands until the gel is dry. The gel doesn't need water to work; the alcohol in it kills the germs on your hands. **Hand washing is the greatest prevention against spreading germs.**

## **Protecting Students and Teachers**

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Some viruses and bacteria can live for 20 minutes up to two hours or more on surfaces like cafeteria tables, doorknobs and desks.

- 1.** Encourage staff and students to wash their hands using soap and water before eating and after using the toilet. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- 2.** Teach students to wash their hands for 15 to 20 seconds, long enough to sing “Happy Birthday” twice.
- 3.** Ensure that sink locations and restrooms are stocked with soap and paper towels or a working hand dryer.
- 4.** Encourage students and staff to use a paper towel to open restroom doors after washing their hands.
- 5.** Clean frequently touched surfaces and shared items daily using an approved cleaning agent. A disinfectant is provided in a spray bottle to every classroom and is replenished by the building custodian.
- 6.** Encourage staff and students to cover their coughs and sneezes using tissues or shirt sleeves, not their hands. Have waste cans for immediate disposal of tissues and encourage hand washing with soap and water immediately after.
- 7.** Educate parents about respiratory etiquette and hand washing at home and their importance in disease prevention. Encourage parents to model the desired behavior for their children.
- 8.** Children with fever and flu-like symptoms will be sent home.
- 9.** Encourage parents of ill students to keep their children home. Provide students with classroom work and assignments to complete after they begin feeling well but are not yet able to attend school.
- 10.** Discourage students from sharing food, drinks or utensils.
- 11.** Consider the need for extra supplies- such as alcohol-based hand sanitizers, hand-washing soap, paper towels and tissues- during the peak of flu season.



## **Protecting Students and Teachers**

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Flu can infect anyone. Few people will have any immunity to a pandemic flu, so it is likely to spread rapidly. Children are two to three times more likely than adults to get sick with the seasonal flu, and children frequently spread the virus to others. Because schools are an excellent place for flu viruses to attack and spread, families with school-age children have more infections than other families.

Some individuals are categorized as having a high risk of developing medical complications due to influenza. High risk does not mean those persons are more likely to contract a case of influenza. It means that if they do have a case of influenza, then they are more likely to have an adverse health outcome than those considered non-high risk.

It is important that we encourage parents of young children and children with special healthcare needs to consult their child's healthcare provider to discuss whether their child should receive a yearly influenza vaccine. Good classroom hygiene will slow down and even prevent the spread of colds and influenza.



## Managing Flu Symptoms at Home

### **If someone in your home develops flu symptoms (fever, cough, muscle aches):**

- Encourage them to drink plenty of fluids.
- Keep the ill person as comfortable as possible. Rest is important.
- For adults with fever, sore throat and muscle aches, use ibuprofen (Motrin) or acetaminophen (Tylenol).
- **Do not give aspirin** to children or teenagers; it can cause Reye's syndrome.
- Sponging with tepid water lowers fever only during the period of sponging.
- Do not sponge with alcohol.
- Keep tissues and a trash bag for their disposal within reach of each sick member of your family.
- All members of the household should wash their hands frequently.
- Bed linens should be washed in hot water and disinfected.
- Keep other family members and visitors away from the person who is ill.
- **If the ill person is having difficulty breathing or is getting worse, contact your healthcare provider right away.**
- Contact a healthcare provider for further advice specific to your family's needs.

### **Plan for an extended stay at home during a flu pandemic:**

- Ask your employer about how business will continue during a pandemic.
- Ask your employer if you can work from home during a flu pandemic.
- If you are unable to work or your place of employment is closed, plan for a possible reduction or loss of income.
- Check with your employer or union about leave policies.
- Plan home learning activities and exercises. Have materials such as books on hand.
- Plan recreational activities that your children can do at home.

**Please contact your local public health department for more information.**

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

## How Does Seasonal Flu Differ From Pandemic Flu?

### SEASONAL FLU

Outbreaks follow predictable, seasonal patterns; occurs annually, usually in winter, in temperate climates

Usually some immunity built up from previous exposure

Healthy adults usually not at risk for serious complications (the very young, the elderly and those with certain underlying health conditions are at an increased risk for serious complications)

Health systems can usually meet public and patient needs

Vaccine developed based on known virus strains and available for annual flu season

Adequate supplies of antivirals are usually available

Average U.S. deaths approximately 36,000/yr

Symptoms: fever, cough, runny nose, muscle pain  
Deaths often caused by complications, such as pneumonia

Generally causes modest impact on society (e.g., some school closing, encouragement of people who are sick to stay home)

Manageable impact on domestic and world economy

### PANDEMIC FLU

Occurs rarely (three times in 20<sup>th</sup> century - last in 1968)

No previous exposure; little or no pre-existing immunity

Healthy people may be at increased risk for serious complications

Health systems may be overwhelmed

Vaccine probably would not be available in the early stages of a pandemic

Effective antivirals may be in limited supply

Number of deaths could be quite high (e.g., U.S. 1918 death toll approximately 500,000)

Symptoms may be more severe and complications more frequent

May cause major impact on society (e.g. widespread restrictions on travel, closings of schools and businesses, cancellation of large public gatherings)

Potential for severe impact on domestic and world economy

For additional information visit: [www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov)



## **Flu Season: Keep Your Cupboards Full**

### **Be prepared for seasonal and possible pandemic influenza.**

Experts believe a worldwide outbreak, or pandemic, of influenza will happen eventually. The exact timing is not known, but it is certain our everyday lives will drastically change during a pandemic.

These changes may include the temporary closing of schools or cancellation of events, disruption of normal services such as utilities and some shortages. There are things you can do now to prepare.

Take time to understand the needs of your household, and take action to help lessen the impact of an influenza pandemic on you and your family. When preparing for a possible emergency situation such as pandemic influenza, it is best to think first about the basics of survival, including fresh water, food and medical supplies.

It may be necessary to protect yourself and others from spreading the flu virus, you may be asked to remain in your home for several days. You can prepare now by stocking emergency supplies.

Public health experts recommend you have at least a one-week supply of food, water and goods purchased over time to limit the financial impact and prevent store shortages. This can also be accomplished by keeping your cupboards full and rotating your canned supplies.

### **Store a Supply of Drinking Water and Food**

- Seal water containers tightly
- Label them with a date
- Store in a cool, dark place.
- Rotate water every six months or buy bottled water.
- Bottled and/or filtered water – recommend at least one gallon of water per person per day, for drinking and sanitation.
- Store water tightly in clean plastic containers such as soft drink bottles.
- Children, nursing mothers and sick people may need more water.



### **Examples of Food and Non-Perishables**

- Ready-to-eat canned meats, fruits, vegetables and soups
- Rice Cakes or quick cook rice or oatmeal
- Protein or fruit bars
- Dry cereal or granola, crackers
- Peanut butter or nuts
- Dried fruit
- Can or jar baby food and formula
- Boxed or canned juices

### **Medical, First-Aid and Hygiene Supplies**

- Have non-prescription drugs and other health supplies on hand. Be sure to periodically rotate these items.
- Medical information for all family members documented and stored with your emergency kit
  - This medical history document should include the following for everyone: allergies; past and current medical conditions; and current medications and dosages.
- Prescription medications; a 2-week supply is best to have on hand
- Prescribed medical supplies such as glucose and blood-pressure monitoring equipment
- Soap and/or alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- Tissues, toilet paper and disposable diapers
- Medicines for fever, such as acetaminophen, ibuprofen or aspirin
  - DO NOT GIVE children or teenagers aspirin or aspirin products as this could lead to Reye's syndrome, a very deadly disease.
- Thermometer
- Vitamins
- Fluids with electrolytes, such as sports drinks (dry packaged mix will store longer)

### **Emergency Supplies**

- Flashlight
- Portable, battery-powered radio
- Batteries for flashlight, radio and any medically-prescribed equipment
- Manual can opener
- Garbage bags
- Camping or other stand-alone stove and fuel. **Do not use indoors.**
- Emergency numbers of family members