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What You Can Do Now to Prepare for an Influenza Pandemic

BE PREPARED

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

STOCKPILE

When preparing for a possible emergency situation such as pandemic influenza, it's best to think first about the basics of survival, including fresh water, food and medical supplies. Because it may be necessary to protect yourself and others from spreading the virus, you may have to remain in your home for several days. You can prepare now by creating a stockpile of emergency supplies. 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.

- At least one gallon of bottled and/or filtered water per person per day for drinking and sanitation.
- Ready-to-eat canned meats, fruits, vegetables and soups.
- Manual can opener.
- Canned juices, baby food and fluid with electrolytes such as sports drinks.
- Crackers, peanut butter, nuts, dry cereal, protein bars and dried fruit.
- Prescription medications and medical supplies such as glucose and blood-pressure monitoring equipment. Store this with family medical history documents.
- Soap, alcohol-based hand sanitizer, tissues, toilet paper and disposable diapers.
- First-aid kit with thermometer and medicines for fever.
- Emergency supplies such as flashlight and radio with extra batteries.

RESPIRATORY ETIQUETTE

Although the currently circulating H5N1 virus has not achieved the ability to pass easily from human to human, health officials recommend people continue to take the same precautions they would to protect themselves from colds and seasonal flu. Make good respiratory etiquette a habit now.

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue away after you use it.
- Cough or sneeze into your elbow or upper sleeve if you don't have a tissue.
- Try not to touch your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs often spread this way.

- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze, or use the restroom and before eating. If you are not near soap and water, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Stay away from people who are sick as much as you can.
- If you get sick, stay home from work or school.

PRACTICE GOOD HEALTH HABITS

In the absence of vaccine or antiviral medicines, preventive measures and good health habits can help your body stay healthy and fight off the flu and other illnesses.

- Eat a balanced diet that includes plenty of vegetables, fruits and whole grain products.
- Drink plenty of water and go easy on salt, sugar, alcohol and saturated fat.
- Exercise on a regular basis. Thirty or more minutes of physical activity most days of the week can help boost your immunity.
- Get plenty of rest. Sleep is shown to help your body fight off illness.

GET INFORMED

To see what the State of Ohio is doing to prepare for a pandemic visit <http://www.ohiopandemicflu.gov>. This inter-agency Web site includes many resources for Ohioans:

- Planning resources for Ohio's families, schools, businesses, communities, health care providers and local governments.
- Fact sheets, questions and answers, multi-media files, brochures and more.
- Quarterly planning newsletters – subscribe here.

For more information on national pandemic flu planning, visit the U.S. Health and Human Services Web site <http://www.pandemicflu.gov>. This Web site includes some of the following resources:

- Planning checklists.
- Family emergency health information sheet.
- Emergency contacts form.
- Strategies to mitigate pandemics.

The World Health Organization Web site <http://www.who.int/en/> provides updates on avian influenza around the world in several languages. Other resources include:

- Advice for travelers.
- Frequently asked questions.
- Industry guidelines.

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