

Pandemic Flu — What Is It and Should I Be Concerned?

A pandemic is a world-wide disease outbreak. A flu pandemic occurs when a new flu (Influenza A) virus appears for which people have little or no immunity, and for which there is no vaccine. This respiratory disease spreads easily from person-to-person by coughing and sneezing. It causes serious illness.

Pandemic flu is different from the flu, or seasonal flu, people usually get in the fall and winter months. With seasonal flu most people have some immunity, and a vaccine is available.

Pandemic flu could affect your normal day-to-day life. Businesses, stores and other services may need to limit their normal hours. Schools and child care centers may need to close.

You can prepare for pandemic flu now:

- Store a two-week supply of water and food.
- Ask your doctor to prescribe an extra supply of your regular prescription drugs.
- Keep a supply of over-the-counter medicines (pain relievers, stomach remedies, cough and cold medicines) that you might need.
- Wash your hands often and teach your children.
- Cover your mouth and nose when you cough and sneeze. Teach your children too. Wash hands after you throw away tissues.
- Stay home if you are sick.
- Keep sick children home from school and child care.
- Talk with family members, loved ones, and neighbors about what to do if they get sick.