

# Preparing for a Pandemic Outbreak

A pandemic is a global disease outbreak. An influenza pandemic occurs when a new influenza A virus emerges for which there is little or no immunity in the human population, begins to cause serious illness, and then spreads easily from person-to-person worldwide. The federal government, states, communities, and industry are taking steps to prepare for and respond to an influenza pandemic.

A pandemic is likely to be a prolonged and widespread outbreak that could require temporary changes in many areas of society, such as schools, work, transportation, and other public services. Informed and prepared individuals can take appropriate actions to decrease their risk during a pandemic. Public health strategies for responding to an emergency may include isolation and quarantine, public information, and clinics to provide appropriate medications.

Any response to an emergency, whether it is a pandemic outbreak or natural disaster, will need the involvement and cooperation of Medina County citizens. You will play a vital role in any response, so your preparedness is important. You can help by preparing your family, your business, and your community.

## Communities, Businesses, and Individuals Should:

- Develop preparedness plans as you would for other public health emergencies.
- Participate and promote public health efforts in your state and community.
- Talk with your local public health officials and health care providers; they can supply information about the signs and symptoms of a specific disease outbreak.
- Implement prevention and control actions recommended by your public health officials and providers.
- Adopt business/school practices that encourage sick employees/students to stay home.
- Anticipate how to function with a significant portion of the workforce/school population absent due to illness or caring for ill family members.
- Practice good health habits, including eating a balanced diet, exercising daily, and getting sufficient rest, and take these common-sense steps to stop the spread of germs.
  - o Wash hands frequently with soap and water (see page three for more details on proper hand washing).
  - o Cover coughs and sneezes with tissues.
  - o Stay away from others as much as possible if you are sick.
  - o Avoid places and events where people gather.

### Key Terms to Know

*Seasonal (or common) flu* is a respiratory illness that can be transmitted person to person. Most people have some immunity, and a vaccine is available.

*Avian (or bird) flu* is caused by influenza viruses that occur naturally among wild birds. The H5N1 variant is deadly to domestic fowl and can be transmitted from birds to humans. There is no human immunity and no vaccine is available.

*Pandemic flu* is virulent (highly contagious and potentially deadly) human flu that causes a global outbreak, or pandemic, of serious illness. Because there is little natural immunity, the disease can spread easily from person to person. Currently, there is no pandemic flu.

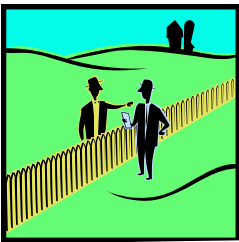


# If a Pandemic Happens

- Large numbers of sick people may overwhelm hospitals and clinics.
- Supplies and services will be limited. Many people will be unable to work, affecting how long businesses, banks, government offices, and other services are open.
- It will take months to develop a vaccine against the new virus, so flu shots will not be immediately available.
- Travel may be difficult. Routes and schedules for buses, trains, or planes may change or be restricted.
- A flu pandemic could last a long time. The 1918 flu pandemic lasted 18 months. In some cases, pandemics weaken for a while and then recur (i.e., "second wave").
- Health officials will keep you informed. They will work with the media to provide timely information and advice.



## What You Can Do BEFORE the Pandemic Happens



### In Your Community

- Know your neighbors.
- Talk with family, friends, and neighbors to ensure everyone is prepared.
- Know school policies about illnesses and being absent.

### At Work

- You may not be able to go to work. Staying home from work when you are sick is an important thing you can do to protect others.
- Know policies. Ask your employer or union about sick leave and policies about absences, time off, and telecommuting.
- Encourage planning. Every business, organization, and agency should have a plan for making sure essential work can get done if large numbers of employees are absent.

### At Home

- Have an emergency supply kit (see list next page).
- Wash your hands (see steps on next page).
- Cover your cough—or do it in your sleeve: Cough or sneeze into your shirt sleeve to prevent germs getting onto your hands and thus spreading to others.



# Prepare and Prevent

## Emergency Supply Kit

Food and non-perishables:

- Ready-to-eat canned meats, fruits, vegetables, and soups
- Protein or fruit bars
- Dry cereal or granola
- Peanut butter or nuts
- Dried fruit
- Crackers
- Canned juices
- Bottled water
- Canned or jarred baby food and formula
- Pet food

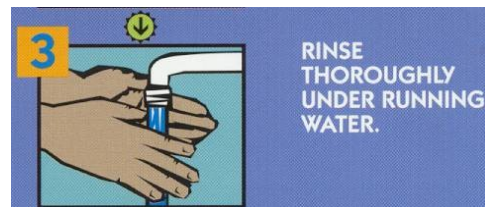
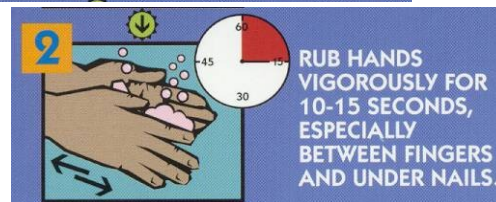
Medical, health, and emergency supplies:

- Prescribed medical supplies such as glucose and blood-pressure monitoring equipment
- Soap and water, or alcohol-based hand wash, to clean hands
- Medicines for fever, such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen
- Thermometer
- Anti-diarrheal medication
- Vitamins
- Fluids with electrolytes
- Cleansing agent/soap to clean surfaces
- Flashlight
- Batteries
- Portable radio
- Manual can opener
- Garbage bags
- Tissues, toilet paper, disposable diapers

**Do you have your emergency supply kit ready?**

## Hand Washing!

Hand washing is the simplest and single best way to stop the spread of disease. To properly wash your hands, follow these instructions:



Wash your hands often, especially after performing these activities:

- Using the toilet
- Sneezing or coughing into your hand
- Coming in from playing outside
- Touching pets or animals
- Handling raw meat or poultry
- Disposing of garbage

# Help Get the Word Out!

The Medina County Health Department (MCHD) is partnering with many local agencies to prepare for a pandemic event. We need **your** help to get the word out. Become our partner as we prepare for a pandemic. Share this newsletter with your friends, co-workers, and family.

The Medina County Medical Reserve Corps is also housed within MCHD. Learn how you can volunteer or download an application form at the MCHD website: [www.medinahealth.org](http://www.medinahealth.org). For more information call the Medina County Health Department at 1-888-723-9688.

Get Informed ❖ Be Prepared ❖ Work Together

For more information:

[www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov)

[www.ohiopandemicflu.gov](http://www.ohiopandemicflu.gov)

