PREPARATION FOR A PANDEMIC

Seasonal flu comes around every year, usually in the fall and winter. And every year, it kills approximately 36,000 Americans and hospitalizes more than 200,000.

Bad as that is, imagine an outbreak of flu that could infect 25 to 30 percent of the population. A flu for which no one has immunity and a vaccine may not be available right away.

A flu pandemic occurs when a new flu virus is spreading easily from person to person and from country to country, causing serious illness. There were three major flu pandemics in the 20th century:

The most serious was the Spanish flu of 1918 which killed tens of millions around the world.

In 1957, Asian flu killed about 2 million worldwide and 70,000 in the United States.

In 1968, the Hong Kong flu killed up to 1 million worldwide and 34,000 in the U.S.

In 2009, the H1N1 flu virus (also called “swine flu”) was declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization. Because flu viruses are unpredictable, no one can say how severe this pandemic will be or how many people will get sick.

A flu pandemic can come in waves, each of which might last for weeks or months at a time. If many people were sick at the same time, it would cause a lot of disruptions in daily life.

Hospitals may be unable to care for all people who would need to be treated. Stores may run out of supplies. To prevent the flu’s spread, government and health officials might have to close schools and businesses, restrict travel and cancel public events. People might be asked to remain at home.

None of this is very pleasant to think about. But there’s a lot you can do now to prepare.

This booklet will help you gather the information and resources you will need to help minimize the impact of a flu outbreak. Included is information on how to provide care to yourself and your family should you get the flu, a checklist of things you may need at home, and instructions for when you should call your doctor or go to the hospital.

LEARN MORE

Allen County Flu Task Force, www.fighttheflu.org
Indiana State Department of Health, www.in.gov/isdh
U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, www.cdc.gov

The difference between...

SEASONAL FLU

• Caused by existing strains of influenza virus

• Spread from person to person through coughing and sneezing. People can also get sick by touching something with the flu virus on it and then touching their nose and mouth.

• Children older than 2 and healthy adults are usually not at risk for complications

• Limited spread within a community due to a high number of people with pre-existing immunity

• Modest impact on society

PANDEMIC FLU

• Caused by a new strain of virus

• Spread from person to person through coughing and sneezing. People can also get sick by touching something with the flu virus on it and then touching their nose and mouth.

• Pregnant women, healthy children and adults, and people with other health problems are at increased risk for life-threatening complications

• Readily spreads within a community because no one has prior immunity

• Major impact on society. Schools and offices may be closed; basic services could be disrupted; people may be asked to shelter at home
FLU Q&A

Q: What is H1N1?
A: The H1N1 (referred to as “swine flu” early on) virus is a new flu virus that was first identified in March of 2009 in Mexico and in the United States in April of 2009. This virus is a combination of swine, avian and human influenza A viruses.

Q: What should I do if my child or I get sick with the flu?
A: The symptoms of flu include fever, dry cough, sore throat, muscle aches, headache, fatigue and vomiting/diarrhea. Most people will have fever and sore throat and/or cough, but may not have the other symptoms. Most people who get H1N1 flu won’t need to see the doctor or go to the hospital although they may feel quite bad! However, some people are at higher risk for a more serious illness. This list would include:
- Children less than 5 years old
- Adults aged 65 years or older
- Children and adolescents (less than 18 years) who are receiving long-term aspirin therapy
- Pregnant women
- Adults and children who have chronic disorders

Q: When can I go back to school or work after having the flu?
A: You (or your child) should remain home until the fever has been gone for at least 24 hours without the use of Tylenol or other fever reducing medications.

Q: How can I protect myself and my family from the flu?
A: Get a seasonal flu shot and talk with your doctor about getting the 2009 H1N1 vaccine when available if you are in one of the priority groups. Other things you can do would be simple tried and true measures such as washing your hands frequently (keep hand sanitizer with you for those times you do not have access to a restroom), covering your cough, and staying home when you are ill, especially if your temperature is 100°F or above.

Q: Is there a vaccine for H1N1?
A: A vaccine should be available soon but it may be limited at first. The people who are most at risk for getting seriously ill from this particular flu is different than with seasonal flu. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that these groups of people get the H1N1 vaccine first:
- Pregnant women
- Healthcare and emergency medical personnel who give direct patient care
- People living with or caring for infants younger than 6 months
- Children aged 6 months through 4 years
- Children and adolescents from 5 through 18 years who have risk factors for flu complications

Q: What else can I do to prepare?
A: Review the information in this brochure. Gather the supplies listed. Make sure you develop a family emergency plan with important contact numbers. Closely monitor the news and follow the instructions of local public health and emergency officials. Visit www.fighttheflu.org for updates.

Be prepared:

- Get a seasonal flu shot and talk with your doctor about getting the 2009 H1N1 vaccine when available
- Store enough food and water to last two to four weeks
- Create an emergency flu kit with essential medical supplies, personal supplies and household goods
- Create home learning activities and mental and physical exercises for your children, in case school is closed
- Make back-up plans for taking care of loved ones who are far away or disabled
- Have a plan for providing medical and supportive care to loved ones at home
- Find out about your employer’s pandemic flu plans
- Practice healthy habits and tell loved ones to do the same
- Encourage family, friends and neighbors to prepare
- Stay informed. The most reliable sources of information will be public health authorities.
Food and Supplies
Keeping extra food and supplies on hand could be important if you have to stay home during a flu outbreak. Because stores may not be open as usual or may not have their normal supply levels, you will want to have enough food and medicine on hand to last approximately **two to four weeks**.

Non-perishable food items are best. You should plan for both normal meals and a diet consisting of plenty of liquids and bland foods in case you are ill. People with special diets and allergies will need special attention, as will babies, toddlers and the elderly.

If you take medications, be sure to have an adequate supply to last the duration. See the checklist for a list of items to have on hand for an extended period of time.

Family Emergency Plan
Record the health information and medical histories of everyone in your household. You will also want a list of any medicines that you or members of your family take, name of the prescribing physicians, the prescription number and the address or phone number for the pharmacy. Be sure to also record any drug allergies that you might have.

Make sure your children and family members know who to contact in case of a health emergency. You should also plan for pets or service animals that might not be permitted in public shelters.

Talk with your family members and loved ones about how they would be cared for if they got sick, as well as what would be needed to care for them in your home. Fill out the emergency card and keep it in an easy to find place.

Communications Plan
As with any disaster, you should have a plan for how you will communicate with extended family members, friends and neighbors. This will be especially important if health officials ask people to shelter at home.

If your parents live out of town, be sure that you know the name and phone number of their doctor and try to identify someone in their community who can look in on them and communicate regularly with you. You might even consider having elderly parents stay with you before they become ill.

Check on neighbors and out-of-town relatives, especially the elderly, the disabled, single parents of small children, or people without the resources to get the medical help they will need. If possible, the neighborhood could even develop a signal (a porch light left on; tying a red ribbon on the doorknob) that would alert others when help is needed.

**During a pandemic...**

- Stay calm
- Put your family plan into action
- Closely monitor the news and follow the instructions of local public health and emergency officials; go to www.fighttheflu.org for updates
Recognizing the Signs of Flu

A person with the flu may experience fever greater than 100°F, dry cough and/or a sore throat, muscle aches, headache and fatigue. Some people with the H1N1 flu have also experienced nausea, vomiting and diarrhea.

For most people, the flu is a mild illness that lasts only a few days and doesn’t require any serious treatment. Some people get much sicker and may even need to be hospitalized.

If you develop flu symptoms and are concerned about your illness, especially if you have other chronic health problems, you should consult your healthcare provider. If you don’t have a family doctor, seek treatment from an urgent care center.

Is it the Flu?

Here are the symptoms to help you distinguish flu from other respiratory illnesses such as the common cold.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SIGNS and SYMPTOMS</th>
<th>FLU</th>
<th>COLD</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Onset</td>
<td>Sudden</td>
<td>Gradual</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fever</td>
<td>High (over 100°F, lasting 3 to 4 days)</td>
<td>Rare</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cough</td>
<td>Dry; can become severe</td>
<td>Hacking</td>
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<tr>
<td>Muscle aches and pains</td>
<td>Usual; often severe</td>
<td>Slight</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tiredness and weakness</td>
<td>Can last up to 2 to 3 weeks</td>
<td>Very mild</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chest discomfort</td>
<td>Common</td>
<td>Mild to moderate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stuffy nose</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Common</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sneezing</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Usually</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sore throat</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Common</td>
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Source: Roche Pharmaceuticals

Getting Vaccinated

Talk to your doctor about which vaccines are recommended for you and your family.

A flu vaccine is the best way to protect yourself against the flu, especially if you are at higher risk for serious illness or complications.

You should get a seasonal flu vaccine every year especially if you are a pregnant woman, a person 50 years of age or older, a person with a weakened immune system or a chronic health condition such as heart disease or diabetes. It is also recommended for children and young adults up to age 19 and anyone who wants to protect themselves from the flu.

A vaccine for the 2009 H1N1 flu is expected to be available soon. Pregnant women, children, young adults aged 18-25, and healthcare workers should get the 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine, as it becomes available. Eventually, everyone should get the 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine if there is enough supply.

Keep in mind that you cannot get the flu from a flu shot. Side effects from a flu shot are very rare. People who have ever had allergic reactions to eggs or previous flu shots will want to talk to their doctor. A nasal spray vaccine may be an option for some healthy children and adults.

There may be other vaccines such as the pneumonia vaccine which may also help protect you against complications from the flu.

What to Do If You Get The Flu

During a pandemic, it may be difficult to see your doctor. There will likely be long lines at the emergency room (ER). If possible, try to manage your symptoms at home. There are a number of supportive measures you can take if you or your family has the flu:

• Get plenty of rest. Your fatigue will likely last for days to weeks versus hours to days.
• Drink lots of fluids, especially if you have a high fever and are sweating a lot. You should try and drink one full glass of water, juice or other clear liquid per hour to make up for the fluid you are losing due to fever.
• Take medications for fever. You may have to alternate between Ibuprofen and acetaminophen for fevers that do not respond to a single agent. 
  **Remember: children under 18 should not take aspirin (also called salicylates).**
• Wear layered clothing, as you will likely have periods when you are hot and feverish and times when you are chilled.
• Listen for instructions. During a pandemic, there may or may not be a vaccine to prevent the flu or antiviral medicines to treat the flu. Call your doctor, monitor the news and check out the fighttheflu.org website to see what treatment(s) might be available and how to access them.
How to Treat Your Symptoms . . .

For this symptom: Choose a medicine with:

**COUGH**
- Cough suppressant (e.g. Dextromethorphan)

**PHLEGM or MUCUS** (that you cannot cough up)
- Expectorant (e.g. Guaifenesin)

**RUNNY NOSE and SNEEZING**
- Antihistamine (e.g. Allegra®, Benadryl®, Chlor-Trimeton®, Claritin®, Clarinex®, Teldrin®, Zyrtec®, etc.)

**FEVER and/or MUSCLE ACHES**
- Analgesic such as aspirin (not for children), ibuprofen (e.g. Motrin®) or acetaminophen (e.g. Tylenol®)

**DEHYDRATION**
- Fluids, especially those with a balanced electrolyte solution such as Gatorade®, Pedialyte®, etc.

**STUFFY NOSE**
- Nasal decongestant, such as phenylephrine (e.g., Neo-Synephrine®) and pseudoephedrine (e.g. Sudafed®, etc.)

**Note:** Some medications listed may require a prescription or you may have to ask the pharmacist for some medications that are now located behind the counter. Be sure to read the label and follow the directions on all prescription and non-prescription medications.

Call your doctor or visit the ER if you experience:

- Shortness of breath, painful breathing or wheezing
- Chest pain
- Confusion, disorientation, or unresponsiveness
- High fever that does not respond to ibuprofen or acetaminophen
- A replase in symptoms
- Cough producing green phlegm or mucus associated with a high fever lasting more than four days
- Signs of brain inflammation, including high fever, seizure activity, stiff neck, headache, inability to walk or any neurological change.

**Note:** Be sure that everyone in your family has identification on his/her person when seeking medical treatment.

Don’t spread the germ...

Flu germs spread through coughs and sneezes. People with the flu can also leave the germs on the things they touch. Other people can get the flu when they touch that same object and then touch their nose, mouth or eyes. People can spread flu for a day or two before they even know they are sick.

Here are some things you can do to minimize spread of the disease:

**IN THE WORKPLACE OR SCHOOL:**
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds (Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if you can’t get to a restroom)
- Cover your mouth when you cough and sneeze (Use your sleeve if you don’t have a tissue)
- Stay at home if you’re sick and do not return until your fever has been gone for 24 hours without any medicine to reduce it
- Avoid close contact with people who are ill
- Follow any recommendations for the proper fit, removal and disposal of face masks or respirators

**IN THE HOME:**
- Try to keep ill family members separated from those who are not sick
- Designate one person to care for your ill family members
- Wash dishes, sheets and any other items used by an ill person with hot water and disinfectant or bleach according to the instructions on the bottle
- Practice other good health habits. Get plenty of rest, manage stress, drink plenty of fluids, eat nutritious foods and avoid smoking.
Items to have on hand for an extended stay at home

**Groceries**
- Ready-to-eat canned meats, fruits and vegetables
- Fruit bars or granola bars
- Dry cereal
- Peanut butter or nuts
- Canned juices, milks and soups
- Dried fruit
- Bottled water (one gallon per person per day)
- Food for infants, elderly persons or persons on special diets
- Comfort foods—cookies, hard candy, instant coffee, tea bags
- Pet food and supplies

*Note: Be sure to rotate your stock and check “use by” date on labels.*

**Other emergency supplies**
- Flashlight, batteries
- Portable radio
- Manual can opener
- Tissues, toilet paper, diapers
- Bleach or disinfectant
- Personal hygiene items
- Garbage bags
- Extra blankets
- Entertainment items—books, games, videos

**Medicines/medical equipment**
- Prescription drugs (Ask your doctor and insurance company if you can get an extra supply)
- Acetaminophen or Ibuprofen
- Expectorants
- Decongestants
- Antihistamines
- Cough suppressants
- Multivitamins
- Oral rehydration drinks such as Gatorade® or Pedialyte®
- Thermometer(s) (one for each member of the household)
- Heating pad
- Hand sanitizer or antibacterial soap
- Eye glasses, contact solution, hearing aid batteries, denture needs, etc.

**Optional:**
- Throat lozenges
- Zinc preparations, including lozenges, swabs and inhalers
- Oscillococcinum dissolvable granules (a homeopathic remedy that is claimed to relieve symptoms of flu)

*Note: If you show this list to your pharmacist, he or she may be able to help you assemble a “flu kit,” which you should review every flu season. Discard any medicines that have expired.*

**If the power goes out...**
Use perishable foods first. Refrigerators will hold food temperatures safely for approximately 4 hours. Then, use foods from freezer. A full freezer will stay frozen about 2 days. A half-full freezer will hold food safely for one day.
Finally, use non-perishable foods and staples. Have items on hand that do not require refrigeration and can be consumed cold, including shelf-stable food, canned milk and bottled water. Heating on an outdoor grill may be a possibility. Make sure to have a manual can opener.

**Additional tips...**
Keep refrigerator and freezer doors closed to conserve cold air. Keep items close together to help keep food cold longer. Pack ice around dairy, meat, fish, eggs, gravy or spoilable leftovers to help them stay cold. Any food that has been above 40˚F for more than 2 hours should be discarded. Food that has an unusual odor, color or texture that feels warm to the touch should be discarded. If in doubt, throw it out.
Family Health Information
Fill in information for each family member in the space provided. Like much of the planning for a pandemic, this can also help prepare for other emergencies.

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<td>FAMILY MEMBER</td>
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**FAMILY EMERGENCY CARD**

- In-town emergency contact (Name/Phone Number)
- Out-of-town emergency contact
- Doctor(s)
- Closest Hospital
- Pharmacy
- Employer(s)
- School(s)
- Religious/spiritual adviser
- Veterinarian

**WANT TO VOLUNTEER?**
Allen County needs medical and non-medical volunteers who are trained and ready to respond in an emergency. If you would like to help your community, contact one of these agencies:

- Allen County Medical Reserve Corps, 260-449-3243
- Volunteer Center@ RSVP, 260-424-3505