



RESPONDING TO AN INFLUENZA PANDEMIC

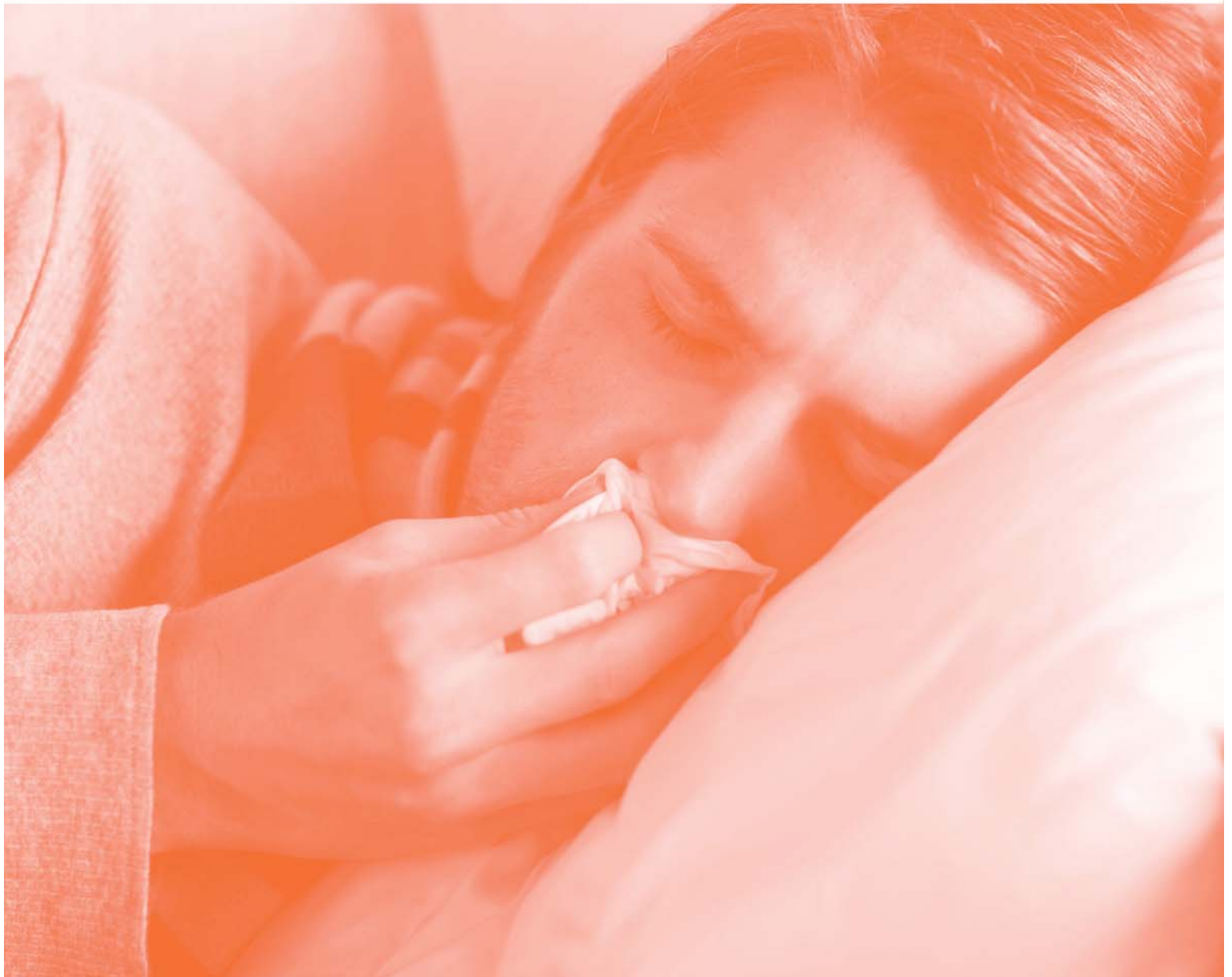


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Challenges and Preparation for Pandemic Flu: Individuals and Families

A pandemic is a global disease outbreak. A flu pandemic occurs when a new influenza virus emerges for which people have little or no immunity and for which there is no vaccine. The disease spreads easily person-to-person, causes serious illness, and can sweep across the country and around the world in very short time.

It is difficult to predict the impact of the H1N1 influenza pandemic. However, the effects of a pandemic can be lessened if preparations are made ahead of time.

As you plan, it is important to think about the challenges that you might face, particularly if a pandemic is severe. It may take time to find the answers to these challenges. Below are some situations that could be caused by a severe pandemic and possible ways to address them.

Social disruption may be widespread

- Plan for the possibility that usual services may be disrupted. These could include services provided by hospitals and other health care facilities, banks, stores, restaurants, government offices, and post offices.
- Prepare back-up plans in case public gatherings, such as volunteer meetings and worship services, are canceled.
- Consider how to care for people with special needs in case the services they rely on are not available.

Being able to work may be difficult or impossible

- Find out if you can work from home.
- Ask your employer about how business will continue during a pandemic.
- Plan for the possible reduction or loss of income if you are unable to work or your place of employment is closed.
- Check with your employer or union about leave policies.

Schools may be closed for an extended period of time

- Help schools plan for pandemic influenza. Talk to the school nurse or the health center. Talk to your teachers, administrators, and parent-teacher organizations.
- Plan home learning activities and exercises. Have materials, such as books, on hand. Also plan recreational activities that your children can do at home.
- Consider child care needs.

Transportation services may be disrupted

- Think about how you can rely less on public transportation during a pandemic. For example, store food and other essential supplies so you can make fewer trips to the store.
- Prepare back-up plans for taking care of loved ones who are far away.
- Consider other ways to get to work, or, if you can, work at home.

People will need advice and help at work and home

- Think about what information the people in your workplace will need if you are a manager. This may include information about insurance, leave policies, working from home, possible loss of income, and when not to come to work if sick.
- Meet with your colleagues and make lists of things that you will need to know and what actions can be taken.

- Find volunteers who want to help people in need, such as elderly neighbors, single parents of small children, or people without the resources to get the medical help they will need.
- Identify other information resources in your community, such as mental health hotlines, public health hotlines or electronic bulletin boards.
- Find support systems—people who are thinking about the same issues you are thinking about. Share ideas.

Be prepared

Stock a supply of water and food. During a pandemic you may not be able to get to a store. Even if you can get to a store, it may be out of supplies. Public waterworks services may also be interrupted. Stocking supplies can be useful in other types of emergencies, such as power outages and disasters. Store foods that:

- are nonperishable (will keep for a long time) and don't require refrigeration
- are easy to prepare in case you are unable to cook
- require little or no water, so you can conserve water for drinking

Stay healthy

- Get a flu shot to help protect yourself from seasonal flu. It won't protect you against pandemic influenza but it will help you stay healthy.
- Get a pneumonia shot to prevent secondary infection if you are over the age of 65 or have a chronic illness such as diabetes or asthma. For specific guidelines, talk to your health care provider or call the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Hotline at (800) 232-4636.
- Make sure that your family's immunizations are up-to-date.

Take common-sense steps to limit the spread of germs. Make good hygiene a habit:

- Wash hands frequently with soap and water.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.
- Put used tissues in a waste basket.
- Cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve if you don't have a tissue.
- Clean your hands after coughing or sneezing. Use soap and water or an alcohol-based hand cleaner.
- Stay at home if you are sick.

It is always a good idea to practice good health habits:

- Eat a balanced diet. Be sure to eat a variety of foods, including plenty of vegetables, fruits, and whole-grain products. Also include low-fat dairy products, lean meats, poultry, fish, and beans. Drink lots of water and go easy on salt, sugar, alcohol and saturated fat.
- Exercise on a regular basis and get plenty of rest.

Get informed

Knowing the facts is the best preparation. Identify sources you can count on for reliable information. If a pandemic occurs, having accurate and reliable information will be critical.

- Reliable, accurate and timely information is available at www.flu.gov.
- Another source for information on pandemic influenza is the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Hotline at: (800) CDC-INFO (800-232-4636). This line is available in English

and Spanish, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. TTY: (888) 232-6348. Questions can be e-mailed to cdcinfo@cdc.gov.

- Look for information on your local and state government Web sites. Links are available to each state department of public health at www.cdc.gov/mmwr/international/relres.html.
- Listen to local and national radio, watch news reports on television, and read your newspaper and other sources of printed and Web-based information.
- Talk to your local health care providers and public health officials.

As you begin your individual or family planning, you may want to review your state's planning efforts and those of your local public health and emergency preparedness officials. Many of the state plans and other planning information can be found at <http://pandemicflu.gov/plan/tab2.html>.

Source: U.S. Government, www.flu.gov

Pandemic Preparedness: Planning for Back-up Child Care

The recent outbreaks of influenza throughout the United States and the rest of the world have shown that the best thing you can do is plan. With concerns and anxieties mounting, it would be easy to feel overwhelmed by the thought of preparing for a flu emergency. However, if you have a school-aged child or a child receiving care while you work, disruptions to normal routines will create challenges for both you and your child:

- How will you get to work?
- Who will care for your child?
- How will your child respond to changes in the normal routine?
- How can you help the temporary care provider become familiar with your child's needs?

By planning ahead, you can alleviate the last-minute scramble to find care for your child. Here are some ways to help avoid this scenario:

Do a needs inventory

Before you begin your search for back-up care, determine the following:

1. Your company's policy regarding time off, sick days, and leaves of absence.
2. Any back-up child care assistance your employer may offer.

Some corporations offer back-up care at a nearby child care center or on-site. Corporations contract with centers to maintain a certain number of vacancies each day for employees' use in cases of emergency. Parents should ask their employer whether or not this benefit is available. Usually, pre-registration is necessary.

Knowing this information will help you identify the amount of flexibility you will have when unforeseen child care needs arise, and it will help you plan the extent of the back-up care you require.

Back-up child care options

Child care centers

The best time to look for back-up care is when you're searching for primary child care. Maybe one or two of the centers **not** selected for primary care would be good back-up care options.

Beside the standard criteria you normally use to evaluate a center for primary care, there are two other significant factors to consider for a back-up center:

1. Do they accept drop-ins? For example, most centers require pre-registration for back-up care in order to minimize future inconvenience to working parents. They may also require pre-payment for a minimum number of hours and have guidelines for notifying the center.
2. Will they care for mildly sick children? If so:
 - Are sick children separated from the healthy population?
 - Is there a pediatric nurse on staff?
 - Will they administer medication with your authorization?

Family day care

Some family day care providers offer back-up care, although availability may be dependent on vacancies. Family day care providers may also want children to be pre-registered, or they may require you to sign a

contract before care is needed. It is important to contact providers to arrange this type of care before an emergency occurs, including a visit to the provider's home, so that you and your child will feel comfortable.

In-home care

Often, in-home child care placement agencies can arrange for an in-home provider to go to your family's home and care for children on an emergency basis. Calling ahead to confirm that this service is available can eliminate hassles when care is actually needed, especially since back-up care is often contingent upon provider availability. Ask the agency about its emergency care policy and fees to avoid unnecessary confusion or conflict when the provider comes to your home.

Back-up in-home care providers should be measured against the same demanding standards as primary care providers.

Agencies

Though typically a more costly option, agencies can be a reliable way of finding back-up care on short notice. It is wise to do some research on agencies that can meet your needs, even if you call on their services infrequently. Here are some factors to consider when evaluating an agency:

- Do they offer guaranteed placement? This is a promise that they will provide a suitable child care provider within a defined time limit.
- What are the placement fees? Are the fees the same for temporary and permanent care providers? Some agencies may offer the option of a membership fee in lieu of a fee per provider placement.
- Does the agency offer any training programs for the care providers they place?
- Are agency-provided caregivers certified in CPR and first aid?
- What kind of off-hours access does the agency provide? Do they offer paging, cellular phone, message center, 24 hour fax services?

Friends and family

Friends and family members may be good resources when your primary care situation breaks down. Talk to them before you need their help, so you'll know who's interested when their time comes. Grandparents may enjoy some special time alone with a grandchild. Friends with similarly aged children may welcome a playmate for their child.

Preparing for back-up care

When the need for back-up care occurs, talk to your child specifically about what will happen, who the caregiver will be, and how long the alternate will be in place. Of course, when things get back to normal, you will want your child's opinion of the back-up care provider.

To ensure a smooth transition between primary and back-up care, compile an information sheet for your back-up providers. Include contact information, emergency medical information, and the personal habits and routines of your child.

Planning ahead for back-up child care arrangements will mean there is one less thing to worry about during a flu emergency.

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Older Adult Needs During a Pandemic

In the event of a pandemic, it may be hard enough taking care of yourself and your family—how can you also help elderly parents or relatives who may live far away?

In advance

If your elderly parents live nearby, bring them bottled water, canned goods, and other heavy items that might be hard for them to carry. They'll also need batteries, flashlights, and extra prescription medications. Contact, or have them contact, their doctor and pharmacist to get an extra month or two of necessary medications.

If they live far away, try to get them to understand that they need to stock up on staples. If they need help, contact a friend or relative within driving distance. If no friend or relative is available, consider contacting a home care agency that can send someone to the grocery store, pharmacy, etc. Many older people may find it hard to accept that something drastic can happen. Don't scare them just try to get them prepared.

Keep in touch

Whether your parents are close or far away, regular phone calls will make them feel more in touch with the world, and possibly less scared. A quick chat with a grandchild will do wonders to brighten up the day of housebound or facility-bound elders. If your older relatives have access to email, sending digital photos of you and your children engaged in fun activities at home can be a cheerful reminder that people can maintain a sense of normality even in trying circumstances. Keep in mind that older parents may be more worried about your health and the health of their grandchildren than they are about their own well-being.

Get help

If you don't live near your relative, find a neighbor who can look in on or call your relative daily. If someone lives across the street, he or she can check if lights are going on in the morning and out at night. If you can't get in touch with your loved one, you can call the neighbor.

Help out

Don't assume that an assisted living facility or nursing home is prepared for an emergency. Ask to meet with or speak to someone in charge at the facility. Suggest they get the checklist at: <http://www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/healthcare>.

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How Does Seasonal Flu Differ From Pandemic Flu?

| Seasonal Flu | Pandemic Flu |
|---|---|
| Outbreaks follow predictable seasonal patterns; occurs annually, usually in winter, in temperate climates | Occurs rarely (three times in 20th century, last in 1968) |
| Usually some immunity built up from previous exposure | No previous exposure; little or no pre-existing immunity |
| Healthy adults usually not at risk for serious complications; the very young, the elderly and those with certain underlying health conditions at increased risk for serious complications | Healthy people may be at increased risk for serious complications |
| Health systems can usually meet public and patient needs | Health systems may be overwhelmed |
| Vaccine developed based on known flu strains and available for annual flu season | Vaccine probably would not be available in the early stages of a pandemic |
| Adequate supplies of antivirals are usually available | Effective antivirals may be in limited supply |
| Average U.S. deaths approximately 36,000/year | Number of deaths could be quite high |
| Symptoms: fever, cough, runny nose, muscle pain. Deaths often caused by complications, such as pneumonia. | Symptoms may be more severe and complications more frequent |
| Generally causes modest impact on society (e.g., some school closing, encouragement of people who are sick to stay home) | May cause major impact on society (e.g. widespread restrictions on travel, closings of schools and businesses, cancellation of large public gatherings) |
| Manageable impact on domestic and world economy | Potential for severe impact on domestic and world economy |

Source: U.S. Government, www.flu.gov

Frequently Asked Questions About Pandemic Influenza

What is an influenza pandemic?

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 person-to-person worldwide. On June 11, 2009, the [World Health Organization](#) (WHO) signaled that a global pandemic of novel influenza A (H1N1) was underway by raising the worldwide pandemic alert level to [Phase 6](#). This action was a reflection of the spread of the new H1N1 virus, not the severity of illness caused by the virus.

How do pandemic viruses occur?

New influenza viruses emerge as a result of a process called antigenic shift, which causes a sudden and major change in influenza A viruses. These changes occur when proteins on the surface of the virus combine in new ways as a result of mutation or exchange of genetic material between multiple influenza viruses. If such changes result in a new influenza A virus subtype that can infect humans and spread easily from person to person, an influenza pandemic can occur.

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Why are pandemics such dreaded events?

Influenza pandemics are remarkable events that can rapidly infect virtually all countries. Once international spread begins, pandemics are considered unstoppable, because the virus spreads very rapidly by coughing or sneezing. The fact that infected people can share the virus before symptoms appear adds to the risk of international spread via travelers.

The severity of disease and the number of deaths caused by a pandemic virus vary greatly, and cannot be known prior to the emergence of the virus. During past pandemics, attack rates reached 25 percent to 35 percent of the total population. Under the best circumstances, assuming that the new virus causes mild disease, the world could still experience an estimated 2 million to 7.4 million deaths (projected from data obtained during the 1957 pandemic). Projections for a more virulent virus are much higher. The 1918 pandemic, which was uniquely severe, killed at least 40 million people. In the US, the mortality rate of people infected with the virus during that pandemic was around 2.5 percent. Keep in mind that this pandemic occurred before there were respirators, antiviral drugs such as Tamiflu®, and other response tools that would surely help today.

During a severe pandemic, such as the one that occurred in 1918, there would be large surges in the numbers of people requiring or seeking medical or hospital treatment, temporarily overwhelming health services. High rates of worker absenteeism could also interrupt other essential services, such as law enforcement, transportation, and communications. Because populations will be fully susceptible to a pandemic virus, rates of illness could peak fairly rapidly within a given community. This means that local social and economic disruptions may be temporary. They may, however, be amplified in today's closely interrelated and interdependent systems of trade and commerce.

As all countries are likely to experience emergency conditions during a pandemic, opportunities for inter-country assistance, as seen during natural disasters or localized disease outbreaks, may be curtailed once international spread has begun and governments focus on protecting domestic populations.

What age groups are most likely to be affected during an influenza pandemic?

Although scientists cannot predict the specific consequences of an influenza pandemic, it is likely that many age groups would be seriously affected. The greatest risk of hospitalization and death—as seen during the last two pandemics in 1957 and 1968 and during annual influenza—will be infants, the elderly, and those with underlying health conditions. However, in the 1918 pandemic, most deaths occurred in young adults. Few if any people would have immunity to the virus.

Source: U.S. Government, www.flu.gov

Novel H1N1 Flu (Swine Flu) and You

What is novel H1N1 (swine flu)?

Novel H1N1 (referred to as “swine flu” early on) is a new influenza virus causing illness in people. This new virus was first detected in people in the United States in April 2009. This virus is spreading from person-to-person worldwide, probably in much the same way that regular seasonal influenza viruses spread. On June 11, 2009, the World Health Organization (WHO) signaled that a pandemic of novel H1N1 flu was underway.

How does novel H1N1 virus spread?

Spread of novel H1N1 virus is thought to occur in the same way that seasonal flu spreads. Flu viruses are spread mainly from person to person through coughing or sneezing by people with influenza. Sometimes people may become infected by touching something—such as a surface or object—with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth or nose.

What are the signs and symptoms of this virus in people?

The symptoms of novel H1N1 flu virus in people include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. A significant number of people who have been infected with this virus also have reported diarrhea and vomiting. Severe illnesses and death has occurred as a result of illness associated with this virus.

How severe is illness associated with novel H1N1 flu virus?

Illness with the new H1N1 virus has ranged from mild to severe. While most people who have been sick have recovered without needing medical treatment, hospitalizations and deaths from infection with this virus have occurred.

In seasonal flu, certain people are at “high risk” of serious complications. This includes people 65 years and older, children younger than five years old, pregnant women, and people of any age with certain chronic medical conditions. About 70 percent of people who have been hospitalized with this novel H1N1 virus have had one or more medical conditions previously recognized as placing people at “high risk” of serious seasonal flu-related complications. This includes pregnancy, diabetes, heart disease, asthma and kidney disease.

One thing that appears to be different from seasonal influenza is that adults older than 64 years do not yet appear to be at increased risk of novel H1N1-related complications thus far. CDC laboratory studies have shown that no children and very few adults younger than 60 years old have existing antibody to novel H1N1 flu virus; however, about one-third of adults older than 60 may have antibodies against this virus. It is unknown how much, if any, protection may be afforded against novel H1N1 flu by any existing antibody.

How long can an infected person spread this virus to others?

People infected with seasonal and novel H1N1 flu shed virus and may be able to infect others from 1 day before getting sick to 5 to 7 days after. This can be longer in some people, especially children and people with weakened immune systems and in people infected with the new H1N1 virus.

What can I do to protect myself from getting sick?

There are everyday actions that can help prevent the spread of germs that cause respiratory illnesses like influenza.

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners* are also effective.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- If you are sick with flu-like illness, CDC recommends that you stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone except to get medical care or for other necessities. (Your fever should be gone without the use of a fever-reducing medicine.) Keep away from others as much as possible to keep from making others sick.

Other important actions that you can take are:

- Follow public health advice regarding school closures, avoiding crowds and other social distancing measures.
- Be prepared in case you get sick and need to stay home for a week or so; a supply of over-the-counter medicines, alcohol-based hand rubs,* tissues and other related items might be useful and help avoid the need to make trips out in public while you are sick and contagious
- What is the best way to keep from spreading the virus through coughing or sneezing?
- If you are sick with flu-like illness, CDC recommends that you stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone except to get medical care or for other necessities. (Your fever should be gone without the use of a fever-reducing medicine.)
- Keep away from others as much as possible. Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. Put your used tissue in the waste basket. Then, clean your hands, and do so every time you cough or sneeze.

If I have a family member at home who is sick with novel H1N1 flu, should I go to work?

Employees who are well but who have an ill family member at home with novel H1N1 flu can go to work as usual. These employees should monitor their health every day, and take everyday precautions including washing their hands often with soap and water, especially after they cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.* If they become ill, they should notify their supervisor and stay home. Employees who have an underlying medical condition or who are pregnant should call their health care provider for advice, because they might need to receive influenza antiviral drugs to prevent illness.

What should I do if I get sick?

If you live in areas where people have been identified with novel H1N1 flu and become ill with influenza-like symptoms, including fever, body aches, runny or stuffy nose, sore throat, nausea, or vomiting or diarrhea, you should stay home and avoid contact with other people. CDC recommends that you stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone except to get medical care or for other necessities. (Your fever should be gone without the use of a fever-reducing medicine.) Stay away from others as much as possible to keep from making others sick.

If you have severe illness or you are at high risk for flu complications, contact your health care provider or seek medical care. Your health care provider will determine whether flu testing or treatment is needed.

If you become ill and experience any of the following warning signs, seek emergency medical care.

In children, emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention include:

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish or gray skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids

- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Not waking up or not interacting
- Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough

In adults, emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention include:

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough

Are there medicines to treat novel H1N1 infection?

Yes. CDC recommends the use of oseltamivir or zanamivir for the treatment and/or prevention of infection with novel H1N1 flu virus. Antiviral drugs are prescription medicines (pills, liquid or an inhaled powder) that fight against the flu by keeping flu viruses from reproducing in your body. If you get sick, antiviral drugs can make your illness milder and make you feel better faster. They may also prevent serious flu complications. During the current pandemic, the priority use for influenza antiviral drugs is to treat severe influenza illness (for example hospitalized patients) and people who are sick who have a condition that places them at high risk for serious flu-related complications.

Can I get infected with novel H1N1 virus from eating or preparing pork?

No. Novel H1N1 viruses are not spread by food. You cannot get infected with novel H1N1 virus from eating pork or pork products. Eating properly handled and cooked pork products is safe.

Note: Much of the information in this document is based on studies and past experience with seasonal (human) influenza. CDC believes the information applies to novel H1N1 (swine) viruses as well, but studies on this virus are ongoing to learn more about its characteristics.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Is it a Cold or the Flu?

| Symptoms | Cold | Flu |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------|--|
| Fever | Rare | Characteristic, high (102° F to 104° F; occasionally higher, especially in young children); lasts three to four days |
| Headache | Rare | Common |
| General aches, pains | Slight | Usual; often severe |
| Fatigue, weakness | Sometimes | Usual; can last up to two to three weeks |
| Extreme exhaustion | Never | Usual; at the beginning of the illness |
| Stuffy nose | Common | Sometimes |
| Sneezing | Usual | Sometimes |
| Sore throat | Common | Sometimes |
| Chest discomfort, cough | Mild to moderate; hacking cough | Common; can become severe |

Complications

| Cold | Flu |
|--|--|
| Sinus congestion, middle ear infection, asthma | Bronchitis, pneumonia, can be life-threatening |

Prevention

| Cold | Flu |
|---|---|
| Wash your hands often. Avoid close contact with anyone with a cold. | Annual vaccination; antiviral medicines—see your doctor |

Treatment

| Cold | Flu |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| Antihistamines, decongestant, nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory medicines | Antiviral medicines—see your doctor |

Source: National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases

Novel H1N1 Influenza Vaccine

Q. What are the plans for developing novel H1N1 vaccine?

A. Vaccines are the most powerful public health tool for control of influenza, and the U.S. government is working closely with manufacturers to take steps in the process to manufacture a novel H1N1 vaccine. Working together with scientists in the public and private sector, CDC has isolated the new H1N1 virus and modified the virus so that it can be used to make hundreds of millions of doses of vaccine. Vaccine manufacturers are now using these materials to begin vaccine production. Making vaccine is a multi-step process which takes several months to complete. Candidate vaccines will be tested in clinical trials over the few months.

Q. When is it expected that the novel H1N1 vaccine will be available?

A. The novel H1N1 vaccine is expected to be available in the fall. More specific dates cannot be provided at this time as vaccine availability depends on several factors including manufacturing time and time needed to conduct clinical trials

Q. Will the seasonal flu vaccine also protect against the novel H1N1 flu?

A. The seasonal flu vaccine is not expected to protect against the novel H1N1 flu.

Q. Can the seasonal vaccine and the novel H1N1 vaccine be given at the same time?

A. It is anticipated that seasonal flu and novel H1N1 vaccines may be administered on the same day. However, we expect the seasonal vaccine to be available earlier than the H1N1 vaccine. The usual seasonal influenza viruses are still expected to cause illness this fall and winter. Individuals are encouraged to get their seasonal flu vaccine as soon as it is available.

Q. Who will be recommended as priority groups to receive the novel H1N1 vaccine?

A. CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) has recommended that certain groups of the population receive the novel H1N1 vaccine when it first becomes available. These key populations include pregnant women, people who live with or care for children younger than 6 months of age, healthcare and emergency medical services personnel, persons between the ages of 6 months and 24 years old, and people ages of 25 through 64 years of age who are at higher risk for novel H1N1 because of chronic health disorders or compromised immune systems.

We do not expect that there will be a shortage of novel H1N1 vaccine, but availability and demand can be unpredictable. There is some possibility that initially the vaccine will be available in limited quantities. In this setting, the committee recommended that the following groups receive the vaccine before others: pregnant women, people who live with or care for children younger than 6 months of age, health care and emergency medical services personnel with direct patient contact, children 6 months through 4 years of age, and children 5 through 18 years of age who have chronic medical conditions.

The committee recognized the need to assess supply and demand issues at the local level. The committee further recommended that once the demand for vaccine for these prioritized groups has been met at the local level, programs and providers should begin vaccinating everyone from ages 25 through 64 years. Current studies indicate the risk for infection among persons age 65 or older is less than the risk for younger age groups. Therefore, as vaccine supply and demand for vaccine among younger age groups is being met, programs and providers should offer vaccination to people over the age of 65.

Q. Where will the vaccine be available?

A. Every state is developing a vaccine delivery plan. Vaccine will be available in a combination of settings such as vaccination clinics organized by local health departments, healthcare provider offices, schools, and other private settings, such as pharmacies and workplaces.

Q. Are there other ways to prevent the spread of illness?

A. Take everyday actions to stay healthy.

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hands cleaners are also effective.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread that way.
- Stay home if you get sick. CDC recommends that you stay home from work or school and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them.

Follow public health advice regarding school closures, avoiding crowds and other social distancing measures. These measures will continue to be important after a novel H1N1 vaccine is available because they can prevent the spread of other viruses that cause respiratory infections.

Q. What about the use of antivirals to treat novel H1N1 infection?

A. Antiviral drugs are prescription medicines (pills, liquid or an inhaled powder) that fight against the flu by keeping flu viruses from reproducing in your body. If you get sick, antiviral drugs can make your illness milder and make you feel better faster. They may also prevent serious flu complications. This fall, antivirals may be prioritized for persons with severe illness or those at higher risk for flu complications.

Q. Will vaccination against the new H1N1 influenza be mandatory?

A. CDC and ACIP (The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices, which provides advice and guidance on the control of vaccine-preventable diseases) will make recommendations for who should receive H1N1 vaccine, and state and local health departments and institutions will determine how to implement these recommendations. If the vaccine is recommended for use, those who choose vaccination for themselves or their children will be screened for contraindications to vaccination (such as an allergy to eggs) and will receive information sheets describing the vaccine's risks and benefits, possible adverse events associated with vaccination, and how to report these events.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Advice for Parents on Talking to Children About Novel H1N1 Flu (Formerly Swine Flu) Concerns

As a parent you know how hard it can be for children to understand stressful situations, such as the current situation of novel H1N1 flu. Stressful situations often cause children to worry and have many questions as to why it is happening and how it can be fixed. It is important to remember to take care of your health and well-being as well as the health of your children. If you cope with a stressful situation well, your children will also cope better. Your confidence and calm attitude will help your children ease their worries and feel safe and secure.

Here are some helpful tips on what you can do for your children:

- Keep activities as consistent and normal as possible even if your normal routine changes (due to daycare or school closures).
- Ask your children what they have heard about novel H1N1 flu. Answer questions openly and honestly, at a level they can understand. Be concrete and do not avoid difficult questions. (See http://www.nasponline.org/resources/Talking_With_Children_About_Flu_FINAL.pdf for more information on talking tips.)
- Allow your children to express their feelings and concerns. Let them know it is okay to be afraid or mad. Ask questions so you can help them identify and cope with their feelings.
- Children always need to feel safe and loved. When they are uncertain about situations and afraid they may need even more affection and attention.
- Limit exposure to media and adult conversations about novel H1N1 flu. If your children are watching T.V. try to watch with them or make sure you are available to answer questions about what they have heard.
- As appropriate, encourage healthy behaviors: eating well, sleeping well, playing outside.
- Use their questions as an opportunity to let them know what they can do to avoid getting novel H1N1 flu.

Focus on what your child can do to avoid getting novel H1N1 flu:

- Wash hands frequently with soap and water for 20 seconds (long enough for children to sing the "Happy Birthday" song twice). Be sure to set a good example by doing this yourself.
- Cough and sneeze into a tissue. (If a tissue is used, throw the tissue away immediately).
- Be sure to set a good example by doing this yourself.
- Stay at least six feet away from people who are sick.
- Stay home from school if sick, and stay away from sick people until they are better.
- In communities that have been affected by novel H1N1 flu, stay away from large gathering places, for example, shopping malls, movie theaters or indoor playgrounds.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Managing Your Anxiety About H1N1 Virus (Swine Flu)

The international prevalence and ongoing nature of H1N1 flu (swine flu) together with speculation that it could become a more serious illness later this year can be anxiety producing. At a recent U.S. Department of Health and Human Services flu summit, President Obama advised against panic and recommended "vigilance" and "preparation." You can begin to prepare now by taking the following steps to manage your anxiety and maintain a positive outlook.

Keep things in perspective. Government officials need to prepare for worst-case scenarios in order to protect the public. The public, however, does not need to expect the worst. Studies show that annual seasonal influenza is more severe than the current H1N1 flu. In the limited number of fatal cases in the U.S., the people affected were already battling a life-threatening illness prior to contracting H1N1.

Get the facts. Gather information that will help you accurately determine your risk so that you can take reasonable precautions. Find a credible source you can trust such as news from www.flu.gov, a local or state public health agency, or local elected official such as a state governor. Gather information at regular intervals in order to help you distinguish facts from rumors.

Maintain a hopeful outlook. Public health agencies around the globe are working to identify outbreaks of the illness and to ensure the availability of the best medical care to those who are sick. Work has been underway for several months to develop a vaccine. For centuries, people have survived difficult life circumstances and gone on to live fulfilling and productive lives. There is no reason why this situation cannot be similar. Limit worry and agitation by lessening the time you and your family spend watching or listening to sensationalized media coverage.

Stay healthy. A healthy lifestyle—including proper diet and exercise—is your best defense against any disease threat. Adopting hygienic habits such as washing your hands regularly will also minimize your exposure to all types of germs and disease sources. A healthy body can have a positive impact on your thoughts and emotions, enabling you to make better decisions and deal with the flu's uncertainties.

Build resilience. Resilience is the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, threats or significant sources of stress. Draw on skills you have used in the past that have helped you to manage life's adversities and use those skills to help you manage your emotions during this challenging time.

Have a plan. Think about how you might respond if swine flu were discovered in your area. You may want to stock up on non-perishable foods in case officials recommend staying home, explore options for working from home, and caring for sick family members, and establish an emergency family communication plan. Explore how you might spend your time if schools or businesses are closed. Planning some of these scenarios in advance can lessen your anxiety.

Communicate with your children. Discuss the flu with honest and age- appropriate information. If your children have concerns, addressing these together may ease their anxiety and distress. Parents can also help allay distress by focusing children on routines and schedules that remain unchanged despite any changes due to flu preparations. Remember that children will observe adults behaviors and emotions for cues on how to manage their own emotions during this time.

Keep connected. Maintaining social networks can foster a sense of normality, and provide valuable outlets for sharing feelings and relieving stress. If officials have recommended limiting your social contact to contain an outbreak, you can stay connected via e-mail and telephone.

Seek additional help. If you have intense feelings of anxiety or hopelessness or are having trouble performing your job or other daily activities, a licensed mental health professional such as a psychologist can help you develop an appropriate strategy for moving forward.

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Media Coverage of the Influenza Pandemic: Watch What You're Watching

You might find it difficult to “look away” from extensive media coverage of events related to the influenza pandemic.

“In a time of increased stress, media coverage of events can take on a life of its own,” says Rich Paul, vice president of Health & Performance Solutions for ValueOptions®. “For your well-being, you should limit how much you watch.”

Tips for adults

Especially if you are feeling anxious or stressed after watching a news program, cannot turn off the television or participate in recreational activities and are having trouble sleeping, you may want to consider limiting the amount and type of media coverage that you are viewing. Some strategies that may be useful include:

- limit your news intake to a half-hour per day, for example
- limiting viewing just prior to bedtime
- reading newspaper and journal articles rather than watching television

Also, if you want to talk about current events, Mr. Paul suggests that you “find someone who is supportive and can help you keep perspective, rather than someone who heightens and exacerbates your worries and concerns.”

Special considerations for children

Depending upon your child's age and maturity, you may want to limit the amount of news your child watches. Talking to your child about what she watches or hears will help her put frightening information into a more balanced and reasonable context. If you allow your child to watch the news, experts suggest that you:

- **Monitor your child's TV watching, and his response.** If it is causing him to have less concentration, trouble with sleep or agitation, then that is a clue that limiting the amount of news or eliminating it altogether might be helpful.
- **Watch the news with your child and talk about what she is seeing on television.** For example, explain to a young child that despite seeing an event, over and over on television, that this was a single incident on one day.

Mr. Paul points out that you can help normalize the coverage of events: “Be honest—don't give a false impression because when parents are scared, children know it. We can share our feelings and give them a framework for coping with them—for example, if your family believes in a ‘higher-being,’ say ‘We can pray that things work out for the best and people will be safe.’”

- **Put the news into context.** “The news media is trying to catch our attention so they magnify the issues,” says Mr. Paul. “Remind your child that there are a lot of good things going on in the world that don't make the news.” Also, explain that there are many good people working to keep them safe.
- **Encourage your child to ask questions.** Your child may have irrational fears after watching a news report because he misunderstood something. If he shares those fears or asks clarifying questions, you can help alleviate his anxiety.

- **Redirect your child's attention to more positive activities.** Mr. Paul encourages parents to get their children outside to play, for both their physical and mental health. "Children are watching too much TV anyway," he says. "Besides being a distraction from the anxiety of what's on the news, physical activity itself can decrease anxiety."

Seeking help

Be alert to signs of anxiety:

- excessive worry
- feeling keyed up, restless or on edge
- being easily fatigued
- difficulty concentrating or mind goes blank
- irritability
- muscle tension
- sleep disturbances (difficulty falling or staying asleep, or having restless, unsatisfying sleep)

Keep in mind that some of these symptoms may be natural to have right after a disaster, especially with intense media coverage. However, if these symptoms persist and your own ways of lessening the impact of symptoms are not successful, consider seeking some additional support.

Sources: Rich Paul, vice president of Health & Performance Solutions, ValueOptions®; The National Center for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder

By Sandy Werner
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Working From Home: Making the Most of “Plan B”

Working remotely from a home-based office can be a challenge if it is not your regular “M.O.,” especially if you add on the significant stressors and potential infrastructure breakdowns that may come with a flu emergency. But in the event of significant H1N1 flu outbreak in your area, situations such as school closures, quarantines, lack of dependent care, family illness, limited transportation, and workplace measures to reduce person-to-person exposure may force employers and employees alike to rely on teleworking as part of a business continuation plan. It won’t be “business as usual,” so here are some tips to consider.

Dependent care concerns: When the care you depend on isn’t there

First, everyone recognizes that normal teleworking is not a substitute for child care or elder care. We all (should) know that caregiving is its own “job,” and that it is not possible to devote your full attention to work if you are busy taking care of others.

That said, you and your employer will need to set realistic expectations if you are in an emergency situation where schools are closed and child care and/or adult care are not available, very difficult to find, or carry health risks. Your employer will need to be kept informed of the reality of your situation, and you will need to be honest with yourself about the family demands that have been placed on you during a crisis. Consider these pointers:

- If you may be called upon to work from home even if your children are present, be sure to have extra “entertainment” supplies at home.
- Keep in mind that children may be more “needy” than usual; a flu crisis will take its toll on everyone’s psyche and emotions, and children will need extra reassurance and attention. Be sure to limit their exposure to news coverage.
- In the absence of a quarantine, you may be able to work out informal child or elder care arrangements with neighbors, friends or relatives, but any such plans will hinge on all involved parties being symptom-free and not exposed to others who are ill. And you will need to keep in mind that the very young and very old are at increased risk from influenza infection.

Teleworking basics

Establish a routine and avoid overwork. Once you start teleworking, you will have 24-hour access to work. You may be tempted to work longer hours. However, working too much can cause stress, and this will not help you stay healthy and grounded during a challenging time. Knowing when to stop is essential for effective performance. One way to get around overwork is to implement specific business hours. Set firm starting and stopping times, and communicate these to your manager and co-workers. At the office, there are routines that structure your time. If you work at home, it may help to establish your own routine so that you don’t overwork.

Establish goals. Develop daily lists of goals and assignments. At the end of each day, go over the list and see how much you’ve accomplished.

Plan in advance for “Plan B” teleworking

- List all of the tasks and upcoming work that you may need to perform remotely. It’s helpful to start the list in advance so that you can arrange for all the resources you’ll need at home.
- Assess your telecommunications services at home, as well as any computer hardware or software you may need. Be sure that you have all the information you need at home regarding logging in to systems over the Internet. It may also help to have this, as well as other contact information for your organization, in hard copy at home.

- Remember that during a severe pandemic, regular telecommunications services and power may be limited or interrupted, so be sure that you and your manager have worked out multiple communication channels.
- Be sure to have basic office supplies at home, as you may be forced to work using pen, paper, index cards, etc.

Avoid distractions. Although you will need to stay in touch with the news media for updates during any type of crisis, you may need to keep unnecessary distractions at bay.

Maintain regular communication with your manager. As a teleworker, you'll need to keep your supervisor informed about your progress and any difficulty you encounter.

Be accessible. Stay in touch with the office and/or your "central command." Set up a system so that you can be reached easily. Make sure that you stay informed about back-up communication protocols, and that you are "in the loop" so that you can remain abreast of any changes regarding your work team's or manager's plans.

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Pandemic and Your Family

In the event of a pandemic, the best advice is, “be prepared.” If you and your child(ren) are unable to leave home for any length of time, however, being prepared will mean more than just stocking up on water and food. It also means staying safe, staying healthy, and staying together.

A different kind of prepared

In addition to “standard” emergency items are listed, if you have child(ren), you’ll also want to keep them happy and occupied. Here are some ideas:

- Keep a special box of toys, games, and crafts for use in the case of an emergency.
- Buy inexpensive fun items—and time fillers—at thrift stores and garage sales.
- Stock up on 25- or 50-cent vending machine “treasures” (make sure they are safe for children the age of your child).
- Coloring books, crayons, and colored pencils are good even for older children.
- Let your child blow off steam and get some exercise running around playing catch with a squishy Nerf ball.
- Older kids are into video and computer games. If you have electricity, letting them play longer than usual may keep you all less frustrated.
- If there’s no electricity, or if you just want to do something together, playing an old-fashioned board game like Monopoly or Scrabble can be very bonding and special.
- Give each child a notebook to start a journal or diary. Writing about what’s going on can be good therapy for an anxious older child.
- Art supplies will help a bored child and may also be therapeutic.
- Now might be a good time to teach your child how to knit or read music notes. Share what you know and love.

Explain what you can

Help kids understand why they can’t go out and play. Just saying “no” will make them angry or upset. But keep the explanations as simple—and age-appropriate—as possible.

For younger kids: “Remember when Billy couldn’t come to your birthday party because he was sick? Well, some people aren’t feeling well now and we’re going to stay inside for a while so we can stay healthy.”

For kids 6-11: Kids this age are savvy and may know what’s going on even if you don’t want them to. Don’t lie, because it will make you lose credibility in their eyes, but tell them only what you know, being as reassuring as possible. “A lot of people are sick, and we’re staying inside to keep from getting sick too. I don’t know how long this will take, but we’re doing okay and we’re together.”

Preteen and teenage children will want to know what’s going on. Even at this age, though, be careful about exposing them to alarming and upsetting news on the radio or television. If they want to watch the news, watch with them to answer any questions and alleviate their fears. Also, children will likely be talking with friends on the phone. Such conversations could be upsetting—particularly if someone in a friend’s family is ill. Encourage your child to talk with you if someone says anything distressing during a phone call or if your child hears disturbing rumors.

Stay healthy!

It’s been said before but it’s very important and worth repeating! Limit the spread of germs by frequently washing your hands—and your children’s hands—with soap and water. When you sneeze, cover your mouth and nose with a tissue, or cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve. When your infant sneezes, do your best to duck! Immediately throw away used tissues.

Maintain a regular schedule

As much as possible, live life normally within the confines of your home. School-age children can continue working on school reports or reading assignments. If phones and computers are working and you have remote access to your job, keep in touch with coworkers. Let the kids talk to their friends on the phone or via the Internet.

Staying up to date

The more prepared you are, the less worried you may be, and the better able to care for your young child(ren). If/when you can, listen to the radio or watch the news on television, but there's no need for your young child to be exposed to upsetting content. Be careful whenever children watch TV—scary health warnings might be aired even during a harmless cartoon show.

Respect one another

If you're not used to being home together for long periods, your dwelling may seem very small. Give each other privacy. Don't barge into your child's room without knocking. If one kid wants to read and the other wants to play music, take half-hour turns doing each.

Each person in the family may have a different reaction to a pandemic, from disbelief to fear to shock. Now is the time to band together to help each other come out positively on the other side.

Be positive and creative

It won't be easy to be positive. As the grown-up in charge, you may be more scared or bored or weary than your child, but you are in charge. In the event of a pandemic, normal rules may not apply.

- Cereal out of the box is a meal if no one wants to cook.
- If you have electricity and some good family DVDs, sitting and watching a few comedies together may make you all feel better.
- Is there a plain white wall in your child(ren)'s room? Let him or her draw or paint all over it, or tape up pictures from magazines. The room can be returned to normal later on, although who knows?—you might want to keep it as a memento of a not-very-pleasant time that you managed to make fun for your child(ren).

For more information:

<http://agbiopubs.sdstate.edu/articles/ExEx13002.pdf>

<http://kids.niehs.nih.gov/pandemic.htm>

http://www.catastrophereadinessclearinghouse.org/myhome_parents.asp

<http://www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/individual/index.html>

(go to Family Guide Checklist, and Information Sheets)

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Influenza and Pandemic Preparedness “Go-to” Organizations

Family and business preparedness information and planning checklists

U.S. Federal Pandemic Influenza Web site
www.flu.gov

State Departments of Public Health
<http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/international/relres.html>

Influenza and health information

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
www.cdc.gov

Telephone hotline: (800) CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636), English and Spanish, 24 hours a day, seven days a week

TTY: (888) 232-6348

Questions can be e-mailed to cdcinfo@cdc.gov

The World Health Organization (WHO)

<http://www.who.int/csr/en/>

The WHO is charged with tracking influenza in humans worldwide and monitoring global responses to it.