

It's Not Flu As Usual

WHAT INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES
NEED TO KNOW ABOUT PANDEMIC FLU



Stanislaus County Health Services Agency
820 Scenic Drive
Modesto, CA 95350



- ◆ Create a family health emergency plan. Complete this chart and post it on your refrigerator, family bulletin board or other prominent place. Make a copy and keep it in a safe place and be sure to tell all who may need to know where it is.

Contacts:	Name/Phone Number:
Local personal emergency contact	
Out-of-town emergency contact	
Hospitals near: Work School Home	
Family physician(s)	
Pharmacy	
Employer contact and emergency information	
School contact and emergency information	
Religious/spiritual organization	
Veterinarian	
Local Public Health Department	

Key Differences Between Annual Flu and Pandemic Flu

ANNUAL FLU	PANDEMIC FLU
Occurs every year during the winter months	Occurs three to four times a century and can take place in any season. May come in "waves" of flu activity that could be separated by months
Affects 5-20 percent of the U.S. population	Experts predict an infection rate of 25-50 percent of the population, depending on the severity of the virus strain
Globally, kills 500,000 to 1 million people each year - 36,000 to 40,000 in the U.S.	The worst pandemic of the last century - the "Spanish Flu" of 1918 - killed 500,000 in the U.S. and 50 million worldwide
Most people recover within a week or two.	Usually associated with a higher severity of illness and, consequently, a higher risk of death
Deaths generally confined to "at risk" groups, such as the elderly (over 65 years of age); the young (children aged 6-23 months); those with existing medical conditions like lung diseases, diabetes, cancer, kidney, or heart problems; and people with compromised immune systems.	All age groups may be at risk for infection, not just risk groups. Otherwise fit adults could be at relatively greater risk, based on patterns of previous epidemics. For example, adults under age 35 (a key segment of the U.S. workforce) were disproportionately affected during the 1918 pandemic.
Vaccination is effective because the virus strain in circulation each winter can be fairly reliably predicted.	A vaccine against pandemic flu may not be available at the start of the pandemic. New strains of viruses must be accurately identified, and producing an effective vaccine could take six months.
Antiviral drugs are generally available for those most at risk of serious illness.	Antiviral drugs may be in limited supply, and their effectiveness will only be known definitively once the pandemic is underway.

THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT

If pandemic flu occurs, the government will be responsible for issuing information and warnings to the public by working with the media to disseminate advice on how to avoid becoming ill. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (www.cdc.gov) and the federal government's consolidated pandemic influenza website (www.pandemicflu.gov) are good sources of information about pandemic flu.

Your state and local public health departments also are excellent resources. Local government officials will communicate with the public about infection control policies in your community and provide other important information.

STEPS YOU AND YOUR FAMILY CAN TAKE NOW TO PREPARE

- ◆ Teach your children about the following common-sense precautions to prevent the spread of flu and model these behaviors yourself.
 - Avoid close contact with people who are sick. If you are sick, keep your distance from others to protect them from getting sick too.
 - Stay home when you are sick or have flu symptoms. Get plenty of rest and check with your doctor.
 - Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your sleeve, not your hands. This may prevent those around you from getting sick.
 - Clean your hands. Washing your hands often will help protect you and others against germs. When soap and water are not available, use alcohol-based disposable hand rubs or gel sanitizers.
- ◆ Practice other good health habits
 - Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage stress, drink plenty of fluids and eat nutritious foods.
 - Avoid smoking, which may increase the risk of serious consequences if you do contract the flu.
- ◆ Discuss important health issues with your family and loved ones.
 - Ask them about how/where they would be cared for if they become ill and discuss what would be needed to care for them at home.
 - Think about who will care for children/people with special needs if all adults in the household are ill.
 - Are there other family members or neighbors who can fill in? Make those plans now and communicate them to all who need to know.
- ◆ Understand your company's sick leave and family medical leave policies
- ◆ Do NOT go to work, school, or to any public place if you become ill!



- ◆ Have generic medical and health supplies on hand. Examples include supplies like soap or alcohol-based hand wash; medicines for fever, such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen; thermometer; fluids with electrolytes; and tissues.
- ◆ Anticipate shortages of common prescription drugs and plan accordingly. If you or a family member has a chronic disease and regularly takes prescription drugs, talk to your physician/pharmacist/insurance plan about having several weeks of medications stockpiled at home.
- ◆ Anticipate shortages in perishable foods, water, and common household emergency supplies. The federal government recommends stockpiling non-perishable food items, water, portable radios, batteries, flashlights, garbage bags, and manual can openers.
- ◆ Anticipate social disruption and make backup plans.
 - Schools may be closed for an extended period of time, so consider pooling child care resources with neighbors and learn if there will be community-designated child care facilities for children who are not ill.
 - Since being able to go to work may be difficult or impossible, talk to your employer about the possibility of telecommuting or working from home.
 - Transportation services may be disrupted, so consider carpooling options to go to work, schools, and supermarkets to reduce your reliance on public transportation.
 - Other public and community services may be disrupted. These could include services provided by hospitals and other health care facilities, banks, stores, restaurants, government offices, and post offices. Think about how you and your family might compensate if you are cut off from these services.
- ◆ To fight the annual flu, get a flu shot. Even those who are not in the high-risk categories should get a flu shot if enough vaccine is available. Those who have underlying medical conditions and everyone 65 or older should get a one-time pneumococcal vaccination.