

# A Message From Public Health - - -



Carol M. Moehrle  
District Director

Most of us are aware of the global concerns of a pandemic influenza outbreak. Although no one knows for sure when the next pandemic will occur, or which new influenza virus will cause a pandemic, history tells us that the impact on society could be enormous.

This informational booklet is designed to help you learn to **Prevent** the spread of influenza, **Promote** an understanding of pandemic influenza, and **Protect** yourself and your family by being prepared.

The precautions we use to fight the spread of seasonal influenza each winter are the same preventive strategies we would use to fight pandemic influenza. Simple precautions to fight the flu:

- ***Cover Your Cough***
- ***Wash Your Hands***
- ***Stay Away From Sick People***, and
- ***Stay Home When You're Sick.***

Public Health finds it important to share this information with you. We take protecting the public's health seriously; I hope you will do your part to ready yourself and your family. Planning for a pandemic will take all of us working together, and together we can make a difference.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Carol M. Moehrle".

District Director

## **Pandemic**

An influenza pandemic is a global outbreak that results from the emergence of a new influenza virus that can cause serious illness in humans, and spreads easily from person to person.

## **Influenza**

An infection of the lungs caused by a virus that can be passed from person to person.

## **Seasonal Influenza**

A common form of influenza that spreads each winter. Flu shots protect many people from becoming infected.

## **Avian Influenza**

Also called "bird flu". A type of flu that affects poultry and wild birds. Humans can get this type of flu through close contact with infected birds.



**Public Health**  
North Central District Health Department

# What You Can Do - - -

One of the most important things you can do is to help prevent the spread of the disease. Begin practicing simple but important habits that reduce the spread of germs:

## **Prevent:**

- Handwashing is the single most effective way to help keep yourself healthy.
  - ◆ Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
  - ◆ If water is not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Cover your cough/sneeze. Either use the inside corner of your elbow, or use a tissue and throw it away immediately. Wash your hands.
- Don't touch your eyes, nose, or mouth. These areas are where germs enter your body.
- Keep your living and work areas clean; sanitize with bleach or alcohol.

## **Promote:**

- Teach your family how to reduce the spread of germs.
- Be a good role model; use the prevention techniques listed above.

## **Protect:**

- Avoid sick people.
- Stay home when you are ill.
- Keep your children home from school or childcare when they are sick.
- Keep a supply of non-perishable food and bottled water at home in the event a pandemic occurs. Start slowly and build a supply, rotate as you use it.
- Keep a supply of medicines and other household items you will need if a pandemic occurs.
- Have conversations with family members about preparation planning. Aging family members, college students, and/or isolated neighbors may need to relocate during a pandemic. Your plans should include these increased numbers in your household.

Visit our website: [www.ncdhd.us](http://www.ncdhd.us)



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# What Is Pandemic Influenza?

## **An influenza pandemic is a worldwide outbreak of a new influenza virus**

A pandemic is a global disease outbreak. An influenza pandemic occurs when a new influenza virus emerges for which there is little or no immunity in the human population. It causes serious illness that can be fatal and spreads easily from person-to-person, causing widespread infection. It is difficult to predict when the next influenza pandemic will occur or how severe it will be. Wherever and whenever a pandemic starts, everyone around the world is at risk.

## **An influenza pandemic will be more serious than the seasonal influenza**

“Seasonal” influenza is caused by small changes in the common influenza virus. Even though these viruses may change slightly from one influenza season to another, many people have developed some immunity. In a pandemic, people would have no immunity to the new virus and no vaccine would be available to prevent it. It could take months to develop and produce a vaccine that would protect against a new influenza virus. Countless numbers of people could get sick and many could die.

## **Key differences between annual influenza and pandemic influenza**

<b>ANNUAL INFLUENZA</b>	<b>PANDEMIC INFLUENZA</b>
Occurs every year during the winter months.	Occurs rarely — three times in the 20th century: 1918, 1957, & 1968.
Approximately 36,000 deaths per year in the United States.	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.
Vaccination is effective because the virus strain in circulation each winter can be fairly reliably predicted.	A vaccine against pandemic influenza may not be available at the start of the pandemic. Producing an effective vaccine could take six months.
Generally causes modest impact on society (e.g., some school closures, encouragement of people who are sick to stay at home).	May cause major impact on society (e.g., widespread restrictions on travel, closings of schools and businesses, cancellation of large public gatherings).

# What May Be Coming - - -

## Preparing for an Influenza Pandemic

No one knows how bad the next influenza pandemic will be, but everyone should be prepared.

- It may be difficult to get medical care. Large numbers of sick people may overwhelm hospitals and clinics. Doctors and nurses will get sick also, so hospitals and clinics may be short-staffed.
- 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.
- You may be asked to stay away from others. Staying home will help stop the spread of the virus. Events may be canceled, theaters and schools closed. If necessary, health officials will issue orders to keep people who have the virus separated from others.
- Medicines for influenza symptoms may be in short supply.
- An influenza pandemic could last a long time. The 1918 influenza pandemic lasted 18 months. In some cases, pandemics weaken for a while and then recur.
- Health officials will keep you informed. They will work with the media to provide timely information and advice. Web sites from government health agencies will also have updated information.
- It is important to think about health issues that could arise if an influenza pandemic occurs, and how they could affect you and your loved ones.
- Gather family health information that includes:
  - ◇ family members' name
  - ◇ allergies
  - ◇ past and current medical conditions, and
  - ◇ current medications/dosages.

# What You Can Do - - -

## Home Care

Learn how to give basic care: know how to care for someone with a fever, body aches, and lung congestion. During an influenza pandemic you will be provided with specific instructions for caring for those who are sick as well as information about when to call a health care provider.

Learn how to recognize and treat dehydration: watch for weakness, fainting, dry mouth, dark concentrated urine, low blood pressure or a fast pulse when lying or sitting down. These are signs of dehydration. The influenza virus causes the body to lose water through fever and sweating. To prevent dehydration, it is very important for a person with the influenza to drink a lot of water.

## Practical Hygiene for Hunters

- Do not handle or field dress/clean game birds that are obviously sick or are found dead;
- Do not eat, drink, or smoke while field dressing/cleaning game birds;
- Wear rubber gloves and washable clothing when cleaning game birds;
- Wash your hands with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer immediately after handling game birds;
- Wash tools and working surfaces with soap and water, then disinfect with a 10 percent solution of chlorine bleach; and
- Place uncooked game birds in a plastic bag or container for transport;
- Cook game birds thoroughly; they should reach an internal temperature of 165 degrees Fahrenheit.

## Learn More

- Idaho Department of Health and Welfare: [www.healthandwelfare.idaho.gov](http://www.healthandwelfare.idaho.gov)
- North Central District Health Department: [www.ncdhd.us](http://www.ncdhd.us)
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services: [www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): [www.cdc.gov/flu/pandemic/](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/pandemic/)
- World Health Organization: [www.who.int/](http://www.who.int/)