

Pandemic Flu Education Guide



Pre-Pandemic Flu Preparedness and
Prevention
for the Mount Desert Island Region

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WELCOME to the Pandemic Flu Public Education Guide. The purpose of this guide is to help inform and educate groups of citizens on what they can do to protect themselves and prepare for a pandemic flu emergency.

While a pandemic flu outbreak may seem unlikely, **the truth is a flu pandemic is a very real threat. No one knows exactly when the next pandemic flu will happen or how severe it will be, but we know it will last longer than other public health emergencies (weeks vs. days).** Given the high level of global travel, a pandemic flu virus may spread quickly, leaving little time to prepare.

When a flu pandemic happens, we expect fewer health care workers and first responders will be available to work because of illness or needing to care for family members.

Basic resources could be limited. Medical supplies may be in short supply, there may be no vaccine for several months and medical facilities may be overwhelmed. Illness and panic may result in sudden shortages of people to provide community services. Schools and some workplaces may be closed; and large gatherings may be banned.¹

A recent survey of over 2000 households in Northern and Eastern Maine revealed that although many people are familiar with pandemic flu, **many have not taken basic steps that could prevent or slow the spread of flu.**²

We hope this guide will help reach employees, congregations, students and other community members with opportunities to take simple preventive actions that are easy to adopt at home, work or school. **By sharing this information with others, you will be helping protect and prepare the entire community for what could be a serious public health emergency.**

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This guide, prepared in July 2007, brings together up to date information on pandemic flu, coming from sources such as the American Red Cross, Department of Health and Human Services, and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. We understand that sorting through health information can be an overwhelming and daunting task, thus, this packet was designed with careful attention to accessibility and convenience.

This guide is organized to provide you not only with the basic facts about pandemic flu, but also with the necessary tools and resources to educate others. The guide begins with general information about seasonal, pandemic, and avian flu. Following this section you will find a discussion of pre-pandemic prevention and preparation behaviors, which empower individuals to slow or reduce the impact of a pandemic flu in local communities. Included are educational materials (e.g., handouts and posters) that we encourage you to distribute within your organization. At the end of this guide we have included WEB links to local, state and national public health resources.



Image courtesy of Federal Occupational Health (FOH)

ABOUT THE FLU

The flu, also known as influenza, is a contagious respiratory disease caused by influenza viruses. In the United States, flu season begins every fall and ends every spring. The flu people get during this season is called **seasonal flu**. Sometimes, a new type of flu virus may emerge to which people have no resistance. When this happens, it can spread more easily from person to person around the world in a very short time, causing serious illness and death. This is **pandemic flu**. The exact symptoms of pandemic flu are unknown. However, they are expected to be similar to those of seasonal flu, which are:

- fever
- sore throat
- cough
- runny or stuffy nose
- extreme tiredness
- headache
- muscle aches and pains
- stomach problems, such as nausea, vomiting and diarrhea (more common in children).³



PANDEMIC FLU: THE DISEASE

Pandemic flu is more serious than seasonal flu. Most people who get seasonal flu recover within a week or two and do not require medical treatment. The very young, the very old and the very sick are most likely to become seriously ill from seasonal flu. Pandemic flu is different because more people who get it might not recover, even with medical treatment, and people of every age may be at risk of serious illness or death. Unlike seasonal flu, there may not be a vaccine for pandemic flu until researchers and pharmaceutical companies are able to create one. If a vaccine is developed for pandemic flu, it will be a challenge to produce enough for everyone and dispense it to all the people that need it in a timely manner.⁴

PANDEMIC FLU: THE EVENT

An influenza pandemic is a global outbreak of disease that occurs when a new influenza virus, to which people have little or no immunity, appears in the human population. It causes a serious illness that spreads easily from person to person worldwide.

Scientists cannot accurately predict whether the avian flu (H5N1) virus will cause the next human pandemic or when the next pandemic will occur. In the 20th century, flu pandemics occurred in 1918, 1957 and 1968. The 1918 pandemic led to high levels of illness, death, social disruption and economic loss. A conservative estimate of the total deaths worldwide is 20 million.⁵



“Emergency hospital during 1918 flu epidemic, Camp Funston, Kansas”
Photo courtesy of the National Museum of Health and Medicine, Armed Forces Institute of Pathology, Washington, D.C., Image NCP 1603

PREVENTION & PREPARATION

During a flu pandemic, government officials may impose activity, movement or travel restrictions to prevent the flu virus from spreading. You may be asked to stay home for an extended period of time even if you are not sick. Schools, workplaces and public gatherings, such as sporting events or worship services, may close temporarily. Mass transportation—such as buses and air travel—may be limited.⁶

Although the thought of a flu pandemic is scary, there are several things you can do that will help you get through and recover from a flu pandemic:

- Build a home emergency kit
- Create a family communications plan
- Wash your hands
- Use the proper cough/sneeze technique
- Stay home when you are sick



Photo by the US Census Bureau, Public Information Office

BUILDING A HOME EMERGENCY KIT

In the case of a flu pandemic, you may be stuck at home for a period of time without access to the items you need on a daily basis, such as water, food, and medicine. By creating a home emergency kit you can get prepared for a pandemic now! If possible, prepare a kit with supplies that will last up to two weeks. This checklist will help you gather the information and resources you may need in case of a flu pandemic.

- **A supply of drinking water (one gallon per person per day) and nonperishable food.**
- **Basic equipment like a flashlight, battery-operated radio, and a supply of batteries. Be sure to include a manual can opener.**
- **Personal care products –soap, toiletries, waterless hand cleaner, extra glasses or contact lenses, prescription and over-the-counter drugs, tissues and toilet paper, and any special items for infants or people with health needs.**
- **A good first aid kit.**
- **Kitchen utensils and dishwashing supplies.**
- **Extra clothing and bedding.**
- **Critical miscellaneous items –notebook & pen, money & credit cards, extra car keys, medical and insurance information, and copies of other important documents.**
- **Games, reading material, and other entertainment items –for children and adults. You might need to stay home for a while during a pandemic.⁷**



CREATING A FAMILY COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

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. For example, if a mass vaccination clinic is set up in your community, you may need to provide as much information as you can about your medical history when you go, especially if you have a serious health condition or allergy.⁸

In order to prepare now for a health emergency, talk with loved ones about their medical histories and how they would be cared for if sick. Create a family communications plan by recording important medical information and emergency contact numbers for each family member. Store this information in a place where it is easily accessible and safe.



Photo by Marty Lueders for the US Census Bureau, Public Information Office (PIO)



Photo by Michelle Frankfurter for the U.S. Census Bureau, Public Information Office (PIO)

WASHING HANDS

Hand washing is effective in preventing the flu, cold and other infectious diseases. According to the U.S Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), rubbing your hands together with soap and water is one of the most important ways to prevent infection. Disease-causing germs can enter your body when your unwashed hands touch your nose, eyes, mouth, and open wounds.⁹

Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds after using the bathroom, preparing food, eating, coughing, sneezing, nose blowing, taking out the garbage, changing a diaper and caring for the sick. Wash hands with soap and water by wetting them, applying soap, making lather and scrubbing, including underneath fingernails. Rinse and dry.¹⁰

When soap and water are not available, use an antibacterial hand cleaner. Choose alcohol hand rubs with 60 - 95% alcohol (usually listed as isopropyl, ethanol or propanol). Glycerol or other skin conditioning agents are helpful additives. Read the directions and use the hand rub appropriately. Never wipe the hand rub off; allow your hands to air dry. When used properly, these sanitizers reduce the transmission of disease-causing germs.¹¹

Make hand washing a habit and encourage others in your workplace or organization to do the same by posting a variety of posters that teach these methods. A sample poster is referenced on page 16 of this guide.



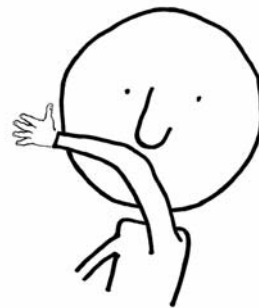
Photo courtesy of
CDC/ Kimberly
Smith, Christine
Ford

COUGH / SNEEZE TECHNIQUE

Many diseases are spread by poor coughing and sneezing techniques. Most people put their hands in front of their mouths and noses to stop germs from getting into the air. Unfortunately, this technique puts the germs on their hands. The germs are then spread to telephones and doorknobs and many other surfaces from which they are then picked up by the next user. This is how colds spread quickly through schools and workplaces, and how the flu spreads quickly through entire cities. It would be very easy to cut this mode of infection drastically by simply getting people to cough and sneeze properly.¹²

Covering your cough or sneeze with a tissue or your shirt sleeve is an effective way to limit the spread of germs. This cough/sneeze etiquette ensures that germs are trapped into the tissue or fabric rather than being spread from hands to other surfaces. With colds always around the corner, with tuberculosis on the rise, and with bird flu threatening to impair the health and welfare of the nation, all citizens should adopt proper coughing and sneezing techniques.

A great five minute DVD, “Why Don’t We Do It In Our Sleeves,” was developed to encourage people to use the proper cough and sneeze techniques. It is aimed at the common citizen. Its message is serious, but it is presented with humor in such a way that it engages the viewer's attention for a full five minutes while the message is repeated in interesting new ways. It can be enjoyed by individuals, but it is even more fun to watch in groups, resulting in community reinforcement. It has been used in hospitals and schools with great success. It actually helps people change the way they cough and sneeze.¹³ To preview or purchase this DVD, please visit www.coughsafe.com. To borrow a copy from Healthy Acadia, please call 288-5331.



Courtesy of Minnesota Department of Health

STAYING HOME WHEN SICK

Studies reveal that Americans are less willing to stay home from work when sick than to follow many other public health recommendations such as avoiding air travel or public events.¹⁴

Individuals often feel guilty taking a sick day, and thus, often come to work although they are ill. As a result, not only does work quality suffer, but also, the health of others.

When you or your child is sick, it is crucial that you keep your distance from others to prevent them from getting sick as well. This means staying home from work and keeping children home from school or childcare.

As employers, teachers, and leaders, please encourage your employees, families or organization members to stay home if they feel sick. With many jobs today it is easy to do work from home: a meeting can be done over the phone, and desk work can be completed from a home computer. Encouraging others to stay home when sick will slow or stop the spread of illness.

GUIDELINES FOR STAYING HOME ¹⁵ :

Cold: Stay home or keep your child at home at the beginning of a cold –when people are the most infectious and feel the worst. Return to regular activities only when you or your child does not have a persistent cold.

Fever: If you or your child has any fever at all it is best to stay home. After all, it is not uncommon for the fever to increase as the day goes on. Furthermore, you or your child should be fever-free for 24 hours before returning to work or school. For any temperature over 100 degrees, stay at home!

Vomiting/Diarrhea: If you or your child is experiencing vomiting and/or diarrhea stay home and only return to work or school after being symptom free for 24 hours.



Photo courtesy
of CDC

RESOURCES FOR YOUR ORGANIZATION

In an effort to teach others about pre-pandemic prevention and preparation, we have included several informational resources, such as an educational poster and flyer. We hope you find these resources useful in furthering your discussion of pandemic flu. Feel free to build upon and customize the following resources so they fit the needs of your audience. Included are:

1. Pandemic Flu Planning Checklist for Individuals and Families
2. Home Emergency Supplies Checklist
3. Family Emergency Health Sheet
4. Healthy Habits Poster
5. Flu Facts for Mainers

To download electronic copies of these resources and others, please visit: www.healthycadia.org or www.mdihospital.org

Pandemic Flu Planning Checklist for Individuals & Families

This checklist will help you prepare for a flu pandemic NOW! Use this as a guide to help you gather the information and resources you may need in case of a flu pandemic.

1. To plan for a pandemic:

- Store a two week supply of drinking water and nonperishable food. During a pandemic, if you cannot get to a store or they are out of supplies, it will be important for you to have extra supplies on hand.
- Periodically check your prescription drugs to ensure a continuous supply in your home.
- Have nonprescription drugs and other medical supplies on hand, such as pain relievers, oral electrolytes, and vitamins.
- Talk with loved ones about their medical histories and how they would be cared for if sick. It is important to think about health issues that could arise if a flu pandemic occurs and how they could affect you and your loved ones.

2. To limit the spread of germs and prevent infection:

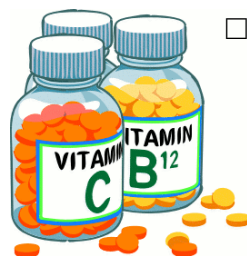
- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water for roughly the amount of time it takes to sing “Happy Birthday.”
- Cover your coughs and sneezes with a sleeve or tissue – not your hands!
- Stay home from work, school, and errands when sick.

Home Emergency Supplies Checklist

In the case of a flu pandemic, you may be stuck at home for a period of time without access to the items you need on a daily basis, such as water, food, and medicine. Use this checklist to help you prepare for a flu pandemic!

Food and non perishables

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



Medical, health, and emergency supplies

- Prescribed medical supplies such as glucose and blood pressure monitoring equipment
- Soap and water, or alcohol based (60-95%) hand wash
- Medicine for fever, such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen
- Thermometer
- Anti-diarrheal medication
- Vitamins
- Fluids with electrolytes
- Cleansing agent/soap
- Manual can opener
- Garbage bags
- Tissues, toilet paper, disposable diapers

Family Emergency Health Sheet

Take the time to prepare for a health emergency by creating a family emergency health plan. Ensure that your family knows what to do in the case of an emergency, emergency contact numbers, and each others' medical histories. Create a family emergency health plan using this chart.

1. Family Member Information

Family Member	Birth Date	Blood Type	Past/Current Medical Conditions	Current Medications/ Dosages

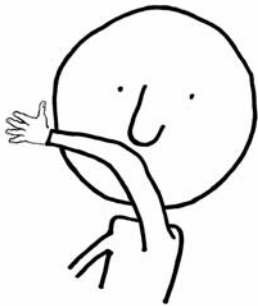
2. Emergency Contacts

Contacts	Name/ Phone Number
Local personal emergency contact	
Out-of-town personal emergency contact	
Hospital(s)	
Doctor(s)	
Pharmacist	
Employer contact and emergency information	
School contact and emergency information	
Religious/spiritual organization	
Veterinarian/kennel (for pets)	

Healthy Habits



Wash your hands frequently with soap and water – for roughly the time it takes to sing “Happy Birthday!”



Cover your coughs and sneezes with your sleeve or a tissue – not your hands!



Stay home from work, school, and errands if you are sick!

Flu Facts For

- ❖ **Seasonal Flu** is a respiratory illness that is easily passed from person to person and can cause mild to severe illness. In Maine, seasonal flu peaks between the months of December and March.
- ❖ **Avian Flu** is caused by flu viruses found among birds. Although bird flu viruses do not usually infect humans, some strands can. The H5N1 virus currently circulating is deadly to birds and can be transmitted from birds to humans. To date, there have been over 200 cases of avian flu in humans; over half of these have resulted in death. However, no cases of avian flu have been found in North America.
- ❖ **Pandemic Flu** is a flu that causes a global outbreak of serious contagious illness. There is currently no pandemic flu, but scientists believe the avian flu H5N1 virus, if it changes, has the potential to cause the next human pandemic.

Although no one knows when the next human pandemic flu will occur, there are basic steps we can take to prepare for and prevent a pandemic flu outbreak.

- ❖ **Hygiene:** Practice healthy habits that limit the spread of germs, such as frequently washing your hands, covering your sneezes and coughs with sleeves or tissue, and staying home from work or school when sick.
- ❖ **Home Emergency Kit:** Put together a two week supply of food, water, and other emergency items. This kit will prepare you for many types of emergencies, including possible home isolation and flu care.

Want More Information?

- ❖ www.maineflu.gov
Maine CDC, Maine Emergency Management Agency, Maine Dept. of Agriculture, Maine Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, Maine EMS
- ❖ www.maine.gov/agriculture/ahi/diseases/avianflu.html
Maine Dept. of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Resources
- ❖ www.pandemicflu.gov
Department of Health and Human Services
- ❖ www.redcross.org/news/ds/panflu/index.html
American Red Cross
- ❖ www.cdc.gov/flu/avian/
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

WEB RESOURCES

Local

- www.healthyacadia.org
- www.mdihospital.org

State

- www.maine.gov/dhhs/boh/pandemic_flu_info.htm Maine Health and Human Services pandemic influenza information.
- www.MaineFlu.Gov Provides information on avian, pandemic, and seasonal influenza for Mainers. This spring, the Maine CDC started a weekly pandemic and avian influenza email newsletter on timely local, state, national, and global issues for people working in related professions. The newsletter may be found in the “Latest News” section of www.MaineFlu.Gov or you may receive it by signing up under the “Contact” section of the Web site or by emailing Janet Austin at janet.austin@maine.gov¹⁶

National

- www.birdflu.state.mn.us State of Minnesota webpage includes comprehensive information about H5N1 avian influenza, how it affects individuals, and what is being done to prepare.
- www.cdc.gov/flu/keyfacts.htm Provides detailed flu symptom information
- www.co.ramsey.mn.us/ph/id/index.htm Includes information on health emergencies and the healthy behaviors that can prevent such emergencies.
- www.kidshealth.org/kid/health_problems/infection/bird_flu.html Bird flu information for kids.
- www.pandemicflu.gov Provides information on how a flu pandemic may affect workplaces, schools, healthcare systems, families, and community organizations. Includes planning checklists for each subgroup.
- www.redcross.org/news/ds/panflu General information on pandemic flu preparedness and preparation.
- www.who.int/csr/disease/avian_influenza/en/index.html Up to date news and information on pandemic flu outbreaks across the world.
- www.ready.gov/america/getakit/index.html Provides an example of an emergency supply kit

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SOURCES

¹ Maine CDC - www.maine.gov/dhhs/boh/pandemic_flu_info.htm.

² Amy Kinner, The Center for Health Policy, Planning and Research, University of New England, "Update on the Emergency Preparedness Survey and Special Populations Assessment."

³ American Red Cross - www.redcross.org/news/ds/panflu/learnthefacts.html.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ American Red Cross - www.redcross.org/news/ds/panflu/planahead.html.

⁷ Minnesota Department of Health - www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/diseases/flu/pandemic/prepare.pdf.

⁸ Department of Health and Human Services - <http://www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/pdf/information-sheet.pdf>

⁹ University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill: Environment, Health, Safety - http://ehs.unc.edu/healthy/pandemic_flu.shtml.

¹⁰ Minnesota Department of Health - www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/diseases/flu/pandemic/prepare.pdf.

¹¹ University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill: Environment, Health, Safety - http://ehs.unc.edu/healthy/pandemic_flu.shtml.

¹² OtoRhinoLounsburgology Productions - www.coughsafe.com.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ "Most Americans Willing to Lie Low in a Pandemic," Harvard School of Public Health, 2006. www.cidrap.umn.edu/cidrap/content/influenza/biz-plan/news/oct2606survey.html

¹⁵ Elizabeth School District Health Services Department, http://elizabeth.k12.co.us/media/EDocs/HOME_SICK_GUIDELINES_FOR_PARENTS.doc

¹⁶ Maine Center of Disease Control and Prevention, "Avian and Pandemic Influenza: What Mainers Need to Do"