

Pandemic Influenza - Get Informed & Be Prepared

A Guide for Commercial Drivers

This guide is designed to help you understand the threat of a pandemic influenza outbreak in our country. It describes commonsense actions you can take now in preparing for a pandemic. We cannot predict how severe the next pandemic will be or when it will occur. But being prepared may help lower the impact of influenza pandemic on you and your family. Additional information can be found at www.pandemicflu.gov.

What You Need to Know

An influenza (flu) pandemic is a worldwide outbreak of flu disease. A pandemic will last much longer than most flu outbreaks. It may include "waves" of flu activity that last 6-8 weeks separated by months.

Some Differences Between Seasonal Flu and Pandemic Flu

Seasonal Flu	Pandemic Flu
Caused by influenza viruses that are similar to the ones circulating among people.	Caused by a new influenza virus that people have not been exposed to before. No immunity to this virus.
Symptoms include fever, headache, tiredness, dry cough, sore throat, runny nose, and muscle pain. Deaths can be caused by complications such as pneumonia.	Symptoms similar to the common flu but may be more severe with more serious complications including more deaths.
Healthy adults usually not at risk for serious complications. Very young, the elderly, and those with certain underlying health conditions are at increased risk for serious complications.	Everyone is at increased risk for serious complications.

Importance and Benefits of Being Prepared

The effects of a pandemic can be lessened if you prepare ahead of time. Preparing for a disaster will bring peace of mind and confidence.

When a pandemic starts, everyone can be at risk. The United States has been working with other countries and the World Health Organization (WHO) to better/faster detect outbreaks of influenza that might cause a pandemic.

A pandemic would touch every aspect of your daily life.

Pandemic Influenza - Challenges and Preparation

As you plan for an influenza pandemic, think about the challenges you might face.

➤ ***Essential Services You Depend Upon May Be Disrupted***

Plan for the possibility that usual services may be disrupted. These could include services provided by government or company offices, restaurants, cellular phone companies, banks, post offices, hospitals and other healthcare facilities.

- Widespread illness can result in the shut down of local ATMs and banks. Keep a small amount of cash or traveler's checks in small denominations for easy use.
- Public gatherings, such as volunteer meetings and worship services, may be canceled.

➤ ***Food and Water Supplies May Be Interrupted and Limited***

- Stores may close or have limited supplies.
- Your ability to travel by car may be interrupted due to fuel shortages.

➤ ***Going to Work May Be Difficult or Impossible***

- Ask your employer how business will continue during a pandemic.
- Discuss possible flexibility in leave policies. Discuss with your employer how much leave you can take to care for yourself or a family member.
- Plan for possible loss of income if you are unable to work or the company you work for temporarily closes.

➤ ***Medical Care for People with Chronic Illness Could be Disrupted***

In a pandemic, hospitals and doctors' offices may be overwhelmed.

- If you have a chronic disease, such as heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, asthma, or depression, you should continue taking your medicine(s) as prescribed by your doctor.
- Make sure you have necessary medical supplies such as glucose and blood pressure monitoring equipment.
- Talk to your healthcare provider to ensure adequate access to your medicine(s).
- If you receive ongoing medical care such as dialysis, chemotherapy, or other therapies, talk with your doctor about plans to continue care during a pandemic.

Pandemic Influenza - Prevention and Treatment

➤ ***Stay Healthy***

These steps may help put off the spread of respiratory diseases such as the flu:

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue away in a trash can immediately after you use it.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. If you are not near water, use an alcohol-based (60-95%) hand cleaner.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick. When you are sick, keep your distance from others to protect them from getting sick too.
- If you get the flu, stay home from work, school, and social gatherings. This way you will help prevent others from catching your illness.
- Try not to touch your eyes, nose, or mouth. Germs often spread this way.

➤ ***If your Travels take you to an Area Infected with Bird Flu***

- Avoid contact with live poultry and wild birds.
- Avoid visiting live animal markets and poultry farms.
- Avoid contact with surfaces contaminated with animal droppings/feces.
- Avoid handling birds found dead.
- Do not eat or handle undercooked/raw poultry, egg or duck dishes.
- Exercise good personal hygiene with frequent hand washing.

After You Return from an Infected Area:

- Monitor your health for 10 days.
- If you become ill with a fever plus cough, sore throat, or trouble breathing during this 10-day period, consult a doctor. Before you visit your doctor inform him of:
 - ✓ Your symptoms
 - ✓ Where you traveled
 - ✓ Direct contact you had with poultry or close-contact with any severely ill person(s)

➤ ***If You Become Sick While Traveling/Driving***

Until evaluated by the doctor, you should minimize/avoid contact with others to reduce the danger of spreading disease.

If you become sick with symptoms of fever with:

- Cough
- Sore throat
- Difficulty breathing, or
- Any illness that requires prompt medical attention

Report to the nearest healthcare facility and inform your employer of the status of your health immediately.

➤ ***Shots (Vaccination)***

Vaccines are used to protect people from catching a virus. If someone has been infected by a virus, a vaccine generally cannot help.

Currently, there is *no* human pandemic influenza vaccine. Once a vaccine has been made, the supply of pandemic vaccine will be limited initially.

➤ ***Medicine (Antivirals)***

A number of antiviral drugs are approved to treat and prevent seasonal influenza. Some of these drugs may be helpful in treating pandemic influenza. However, medicines alone cannot effectively contain the spread of pandemic influenza. The Federal government is stockpiling these drugs that can be used in the early stages of the flu. These drugs are available by prescription only.

Stay Informed

Knowing the facts is the best preparation.

Identify sources you can count on for reliable information. If a pandemic occurs, having good information is critical.

- Visit: www.pandemicflu.gov
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) hotline:

1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636) (available in English and Spanish 24/7)

TDY: 1-888-232-6348

Questions can be emailed to inquiry@cdc.gov.

- Links to state departments of public health can be found at www.pandemicflu.gov/state/statecontacts.html