

### Why is pandemic flu important now?

- History shows that influenza pandemics do recur. No one knows when a new pandemic will occur. It could be very soon or years from now but a pandemic will occur.
- Since 2003, an avian flu virus (H5N1) has infected an unusually large number of birds and a high percentage of them died. This virus has infected other animals and a small number of people as well. Almost all of these people had close contact with infected birds. About half of the people infected died. Scientists are concerned that this or another avian virus could adapt to humans.
- Flu strains are constantly changing. If a strain begins to circulate that the population is not immune to, the virus could spread quickly unless countermeasures are taken. Millions could be infected.



To help stop the spread of germs, cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.

### How can I prepare for a pandemic?

PandemicFlu.gov has planning checklists you can use to prepare now.

- Store at least a two week supply of water and food. This can be useful in other emergencies, too.
- Have extra prescription drugs, nonprescription drugs and other health supplies on hand.
- Prepare a Family Emergency Health Information Sheet (see PandemicFlu.gov).

### Stay informed

- Follow reports of avian and pandemic flu in the news media.
- Contact your chain of command if you or a family member become sick.
- Check your medical treatment facility's website for local information.
- More information is available on these Internet sites:
  - ▶ U.S. Government Pandemic Flu Website  
<http://www.PandemicFlu.gov>
  - ▶ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention - Avian Influenza (Bird Flu)  
<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/avian/>
  - ▶ World Health Organization - Avian Influenza  
[http://www.who.int/csr/disease/avian\\_influenza/en/index.html](http://www.who.int/csr/disease/avian_influenza/en/index.html)
  - ▶ Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy – Latest News  
<http://www.cidrap.umn.edu/index.html>
  - ▶ Department of Defense Pandemic Flu Watchboard  
<https://fhpp.osd.mil/aiWatchboard/index.html>



<http://usachppm.apgea.army.mil>

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### Pandemic Influenza Fact Sheet For Service Members and Families



“Action in the Face of an  
Uncertain Threat”

# Pandemic Flu Facts

### What is influenza?

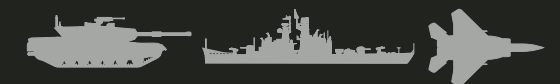
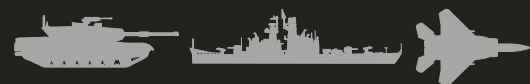
Influenza (or flu) is a contagious virus that mainly affects the respiratory system. It causes mild illness in most people but can be severe. Most people who are infected by a particular strain of influenza or who are vaccinated against it become immune to that strain.

### What is pandemic flu?

Pandemic flu is a global outbreak of flu that affects a large portion of the population. A flu pandemic occurs when a flu virus that most people are not immune to begins to circulate and spreads easily from person to person. This can occur when a flu virus that typically infects animals adapts to humans, when a virus that has not circulated for many years begins to recirculate, or when several viruses exchange characteristics leading to a new, more dangerous virus.

### Pandemics of the 20th century

- ▶ **Spanish flu: 1918-1919**  
Worldwide, 50 million people died, many within the first few days of infection. Nearly half of those who died were young, healthy adults, including many service members. In the U.S., 675,000 people died.
- ▶ **Asian flu: 1957-1958**  
One to two million people died around the world during this pandemic, and in the U.S., 70,000 people died.
- ▶ **Hong Kong flu: 1968-1969**  
Globally, approximately 700,000 people died, with 34,000 deaths in the U.S.



### What can I expect if there is a pandemic?

- Although scientists are working on a vaccine to protect against pandemic flu, there will probably not be an adequate supply of the vaccine available at first. Once the pandemic strain is identified, vaccine development and production may take several months.
- Antiviral drugs will probably be in short supply and may not be effective against the virus. Even if antiviral drugs work at first, the virus may develop resistance and the antiviral drug may become ineffective.
- Health care will be in great demand. The World Health Organization estimates that between 20% and 50% of the global population may be affected by the pandemic. There may be fewer healthcare providers available as well as a shortage of beds, ventilators and other supplies.
- In an affected community, a pandemic outbreak will last about 6-10 weeks. More than one wave of a pandemic is likely.
- Everyday life could be disrupted with so many people ill at the same time. You may be unable to work. Businesses, schools and government offices could close. Public gatherings and travel may be cancelled. Transportation could be disrupted. There could be food and water shortages.



Cleaning your hands frequently, especially after coughing or sneezing, can help you avoid getting sick and can prevent the spread of influenza.

Seasonal Flu	Pandemic Flu
• Small change in a virus	• Major change in a virus (can jump from birds to humans)
• Occurs each winter	• Occurs rarely and during any season of the year
• People usually have some immunity from previous exposure	• No previous exposure – little or no immunity
• The people most at risk are the very young and the very old	• People of every age may be at risk
• Symptoms: fever, headache, tiredness, dry cough, muscle pain	• Symptoms may be more severe and complications more frequent
• 36,000 deaths per year in the U.S.	• Death toll could be quite high
• A vaccine is available	• A vaccine may not be available until 6-9 months into the pandemic
• Antiviral drugs are usually available	• Antiviral drugs may be in limited supply
• Health systems can usually meet public and patient needs	• Health systems may be overwhelmed
• Modest impact on society (some school closings, asking sick people to stay home)	• May have major impact on society. Usual services may be disrupted.
• Manageable impact on domestic and world economy	• Potential for severe impact on domestic and world economy

### What if I travel to an affected area?

Human infection with avian flu is very rare but travelers should take precautions:

- Avoid all direct contact with uncooked poultry as well as poultry farms and bird markets.
- Avoid contact with poultry feces or secretions.
- Thoroughly cook all foods from poultry, including eggs and poultry blood.
- If you become sick, a U.S. consular officer can assist you in locating medical services and informing your family or friends.
- Monitor your health for 10 days after return. If you become ill, tell your healthcare provider where you traveled.

### What's being done?

- Poultry farms have increased biosecurity measures to reduce human exposure to the H5N1 avian influenza strain and infected poultry are destroyed immediately.
- Many governments and the Department of Defense are stockpiling vaccines, antiviral medicines, antibiotics and personal protective equipment.
- Laboratory personnel are being trained to test for pandemic viruses.
- Scientists are developing new vaccines they hope will combat a pandemic flu virus. Testing of several vaccines has begun.
- Worldwide surveillance systems to detect avian flu are being enhanced.
- International, national, state, and local agencies, communities, businesses, schools, health care facilities and individuals are developing plans to deal with the pandemic. Checklists to help develop these plans are available at [PandemicFlu.gov](http://PandemicFlu.gov).

### What can I do to avoid getting sick and prevent the spread of influenza?

- If you feel sick, stay home and away from others. Symptoms range from flu-like symptoms (fever, headache, tiredness) to eye infections, pneumonia, and severe respiratory diseases.
- Stay away from people who are sick.
- To help stop the spread of germs -
  - ▶ Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.
  - ▶ If you do not have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve, not your hands.
  - ▶ Put your used tissue in the waste basket.
- Clean your hands frequently, especially after coughing or sneezing.
  - ▶ Wash with soap and water or clean with alcohol-based hand cleaner.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth as much as possible.
- Avoid smoking and tobacco smoke.
- Get vaccinated with the seasonal flu vaccine. People in high risk groups should be vaccinated against bacterial pneumonia as well. Although these vaccines will not prevent infection by a pandemic influenza strain, they can decrease the risk of complications.
- Wear a mask if directed by your healthcare provider. If you are not sick but are in close contact with sick people, consider wearing a disposable surgical mask. Change the mask every 4 hours or when it becomes wet or soiled. Wash your hands after removing your mask.
- If told to wear a disposable mask, wear it as instructed:
  - ▶ Secure ties or bands at the middle of the head and neck
  - ▶ Fix flexible band to nose bridge
  - ▶ Fit snug to face and below chin