

# Preparing for a pandemic flu

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Most families have an evacuation plan for a fire in their home, but have you thought of preparing a family plan for a pandemic outbreak? Experts such as the Centers for Disease Control state it is just a matter of time before evidence of the Avian Influenza A appears in the United States. The Avian Influenza is a disease found among poultry such as chickens, turkeys, pheasants, quail, ducks, geese, guinea fowl as well as a wide variety of other birds including migratory waterfowl. It can also be transmitted between different species such as poultry to pig, cats and dogs.

The worst pandemic of influenza recorded was caused by the 1918 Spanish influenza virus. This influenza killed somewhere between 20 to 40 million people, cited as the "most devastating epidemic in recorded world history."

The seasonal flu kills approximately 36 to 40 thousand Americans each winter. Health experts believe a pandemic flu could kill over half a million in the U.S. alone. It is believed a pandemic flu will spread rapidly and easily from person to person touching every age group. This year the World Health Organization has reported 88 cases of Avian Influenza A with 58 deaths (All WHO cases are laboratory-confirmed cases). Overall, there have been 232 cases reported with 134 deaths from 2003 to the present.

William Beaumont Army Medical Center has established a Web site link with many helpful tools to assist you in your family's preparation. Go to [www.wbamc.amedd.army.mil](http://www.wbamc.amedd.army.mil) and click on Pandemic Questions. The family emergency health information sheet established by the CDC reminds you how important it is to have medical information on hand quickly. Your medical record may not be readily available and computer systems maybe slow or not running properly related to increased activity. Check out the Pandemic Flu planning checklist for individuals and families; two weeks of supplies is

the key. Did you know that you should wash your hands with an anti-bacterial soap for at least 15 seconds? If you have children, train them on how to properly wash their hands. Proper hand washing is the number one way to prevent the spread of infection. You may need to also have a supply of instant hand sanitizer gel formulas to disinfect your hands quickly if there is no running water. Get into the practice of covering your nose and mouth with tissue when you cough or sneeze or use your upper sleeve not your hands. If you get the flu, stay home and avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth which is a common way to spread germs. WBAMC will ensure Fort Bliss receives health updates in a timely manner and provide further related instructions.

Try and be proactive. Don't wait until cases are reported in your area. Inform your family and loved ones of the family pandemic plan. The better prepared you are, the less panic your family may experience. Ask yourself these questions: Do you have at minimum two weeks of water and food supplies in your home on any given day? If you have special needs such as family members in your home or family members who have a chronic disease, how will they be cared for if you had to stay in your home for an extended period of time? Could they be cared for in the home? What prescription medications and medical supplies will you need? Do you have batteries, a portable radio, a manual can opener, tissue, toilet paper, disposable diapers, soap/cleansing agents and basic over-the-counter medications for fever, diarrhea and cough. If you can't say you have these items in place, you are not prepared and unnecessary panic could follow.

Other helpful Web sites about pandemics and avian flu are:

- [www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov)
- [www.avianFlu.gov](http://www.avianFlu.gov)
- [www.cdc.gov/flu/avian/gen-info/pandemic](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/avian/gen-info/pandemic)
- [www.dhhs.gov/nvpo/pandemics/](http://www.dhhs.gov/nvpo/pandemics/)
- <http://chppm-www.apgea.army.mil>
- [www.cidrap.umn.edu/cidrap/content/influenza/panflu/index.html](http://www.cidrap.umn.edu/cidrap/content/influenza/panflu/index.html)

## Tips to plan for a pandemic

- Store a two week supply of water and food. During a pandemic, if you cannot get to a store, or if stores are out of supplies, it will be important for you to have extra supplies on hand. This can be useful in other types of emergencies, such as power outages and disasters.
- Talk with family members and loved ones about how they would be cared for if they got sick, or what will be needed to care for them in your home.
- Volunteer with local groups to prepare and assist with emergency response.
- Get involved in your community as it works to prepare for an influenza pandemic.

### To limit the spread of germs and prevent infection:

- Teach your children to wash hands frequently with soap and water, and model the correct behavior.
- Teach your children to cover coughs and sneezes with tissues, and be sure to model that behavior.
- Teach your children to stay away from others as much as possible if they are sick. Stay home from work and school if sick.

### Items to have on hand for an extended stay at home:

- Ready-to-eat canned meats, fish, fruits, vegetables, beans, and soups
- Prescribed medical supplies such as glucose and blood-pressure monitoring equipment
- Protein or fruit bars/ Peanut butter or nuts
- Soap and water, or alcohol-based (60-95%) hand wash/ Cleansing agent/soap
- Dry cereal or granola
- Medicines for fever, such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen
- Thermometer
- Dried fruit
- Anti-diarrheal medication
- Crackers
- Vitamins
- Canned juices/ Fluids with electrolytes
- Bottled water
- Canned or jarred baby food and formula
- Flashlight/ portable radio/ batteries
- Pet food
- Manual can opener
- Garbage bags
- Tissues, toilet paper, disposable diapers

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