



Home Care for Pandemic Flu

What is Pandemic Influenza (Flu)?

Pandemic flu is a new type of influenza virus that spreads all over the world and infects a large number of people, causing severe illnesses and many deaths. During a pandemic, it will be important to monitor the most current information from the Orange County health department (see www.ocalthinfo.com) about the disease, available telephone advice lines, and the availability of antiviral medications for treatment of pandemic flu.

Pandemic Flu Symptoms

Symptoms of pandemic flu are similar to those of seasonal flu but may be more severe. Watch for:

- Fever
- Cough
- Runny nose
- Sore throat
- Body aches

Other symptoms may also occur such as headache, tiredness, weakness, muscle pain, and vomiting or diarrhea (mainly in children).

Monitor Pandemic Flu Symptoms

Keep a care log for each sick person. Write down the date, time, fever, symptoms, medicines given and dosage. Make a new entry at least every 4 hours or when symptoms change.

Prevent Dehydration

Dehydration occurs when the body loses too much water and the water is not replaced quickly enough. It can be serious. Signs of dehydration include:

- Dry mouth with decreased saliva
- Decreased or no urine
- Dark or concentrated urine
- No tears when crying
- Sunken eyes
- Dizziness when standing up

A person with flu should:

- Stay home and avoid contact with others.
- Rest and drink plenty of liquids.
- Avoid alcohol and tobacco.
- Wear a mask when around others.

Reduce Fever

Fever is the body's normal reaction to infection. Reducing fever will not make the infection get better faster but may make the ill person more comfortable and feel better. To help reduce a fever:

- Give plenty of fluids.
- Give fever-reducing medication, such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen, following the directions on the container's label. Do not give aspirin or products containing aspirin to persons under 19 years of age.

A sponge bath with lukewarm water will not reduce fever but may relieve discomfort.

When to Call for Help

During a pandemic, doctors and other medical providers will be overwhelmed with sick patients and may not be able to respond to each phone call.

Call your medical provider or a medical advice line for:

- High fever (rectal temperature of 100.4 F (38 C) or higher) in a baby up to 3 months
- Fever that does not go away after 5 days, or goes away and then comes back again
- Dehydration (see next column)
- Worsening of an existing serious medical condition (such as heart or lung disease, diabetes, HIV cancer)

If you cannot reach anyone and these problems continue, call 9-1-1.

Also call 9-1-1 for any of the following:

- Irritability or confusion
- Difficulty breathing or chest pain
- Bluish skin
- Stiff neck
- Inability to move an arm or leg
- First-time seizure



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How is Pandemic Flu Spread?

Flu viruses are spread from infectious droplets from the mouth and nose of an infected person. Healthy people get infected by breathing in these infectious droplets or touching surfaces or objects contaminated by the droplets.

Healthy Habits for Everyday to Prevent the Spread of Illness

- Wash your hands often with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Put used tissues in a wastebasket. Clean your hands afterwards.
- Cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve if you don't have a tissue.
- Keep your hands away from your eyes, nose and mouth to prevent germs from entering your body.

Washing Your Hands

- Wet hands with warm, running water and apply liquid soap
- Rub hands together for at least 15 seconds, covering all surfaces and fingers and scrubbing nails
- Rinse your hands with water
- Dry your hands well with a clean paper towel and use it to turn off the faucet.

Additional Tips for Caregiving

- Assign only one person to be the caregiver if possible.
- Wear a respirator (preferable) or mask upon entering the room with an ill person.
- Wash your hands before and after providing care.
- Wear disposable gloves when in contact with or cleaning up body fluids.

Prepare for a Flu Pandemic Now

Figure out what you will do if members in your household have to stay home from work or school or stay separated from others for a period of time. Keep at least a 2 week supply of extra food, water, and medications on hand, along with your disaster supply kit. For a list of items to include, see www.ochealthinfo.com.

For more information, contact Orange County Health Care Agency at 1-800-564-8448 or see www.ochealthinfo.com.

Visit our web site:
www.HealthDisasterOC.org/Flu

This guide was adapted from the American Red Cross "Home Care for Pandemic Flu" 2006.

Protect Others in Your Home when Someone is Sick

If someone in the household is sick, it is important to continue to encourage the everyday Healthy Habits (left column), but also follow these tips to protect yourself and others in your home.

- Isolate (separate) the sick person from others. If possible, have him stay in a room by himself and use his own bathroom. Keep the room door closed. Open the window for fresh air as much as possible. The sick person should wear a mask when others enter the room or are nearby.
- Keep everyone's personal items separate, such as pens, paper, toys, clothes, towels, sheets, blankets, food, and eating utensils.
- Disinfect door knobs, switches, handles, toys, and other surfaces that are commonly touched around the home.
- Use detergent and hot water to wash dishes and clothes. It's okay to wash everyone's dishes and clothes together. Wash your hands after handling dirty laundry.

Disinfectant recipe:

- ¼ cup bleach in one (1) gallon of cool water
- Mix a fresh batch every time you use it