Healthy planning for a pandemic event

A pandemic occurs when a new virus that is different from seasonal viruses emerges and spreads quickly between people, causing illness worldwide. Most people will lack immunity to the pandemic virus. Pandemic viruses can be more severe, causing more deaths than seasonal strains. Because it is a new virus, a vaccine may not be available right away. A pandemic could therefore overwhelm normal operations in schools, workplaces, and other community settings.

Help slow the spread

When a new virus emerges, it can take up to 6 months before a pandemic vaccine is widely available. When a vaccine is not available, nonpharmaceutical interventions (NPIs) are the best way to help slow the spread of flu. They include personal, community, and environmental actions. These actions are most effective when used together.

You play a key role in pandemic readiness. Safeguard your health and the health of your household members by making a pandemic event plan now.

Did you know that school dismissals may happen if a pandemic occurs?

A flu pandemic can last for several months. Public health officials may recommend community actions based on the severity of the pandemic that limit exposure, such as temporarily dismissing schools early in a pandemic. Dismissing schools can help slow the spread of disease before pandemic flu becomes widespread in the community. School authorities also may decide to dismiss schools if too many students or staff are absent. School dismissals and other NPI recommendations may be challenging to plan for and implement in your household. However, you may be asked to follow such recommendations for the safety and well-being for your household members.

Developing a household plan for pandemic flu will help ensure flu readiness. The details of your plan should be based on the needs and daily routine of your household, including alternative arrangements for child, elder, and pet care.

Be prepared for changes or closures of your child’s school or child care or your workplace

- Learn about the emergency operations plan at your child’s school or child care facility
- Plan alternative child care arrangements for children
- Learn about your employers emergency operations plan

Create a household emergency plan of action for pandemic events. These include:

- Talk with the people who need to be included in your plan
- Plan ways to care for those at greater risk for serious complications
- Get to know your neighbors
- Identify organizations in your community that can offer assistance
- Create an emergency contact list

Practice good personal health habits and plan for home-based actions to prevent spreading illnesses. You should:

- Practice and teach everyday preventative actions now
- Plan to have extra supplies of important items on hand
- Choose a room in your home that can be used to separate sick household members from those who are healthy
- Discourage children and teens from gathering in large public areas and at events while school is dismissed

Put your emergency plan into action!

- Stay informed about the local pandemic situation
- Stay home if you become sick and notify your workplace if your schedule changes
- Keep track of school dismissals and keep routines at home as normal as possible
- Use the separate room and bathroom you prepared for sick household members
- Know your risk for getting and spreading an illness before you decide to attend a large public event

For more information, visit:

- [www.ready.gov/getinvolved](http://www.ready.gov/getinvolved)
- [www.cdc.gov/npi](http://www.cdc.gov/npi)