





NEWSLETTER

Pandemic Flu and What **YOU** Can Do To Prevent, Prepare and Protect Yourself




Public health experts warn that we are overdue for a flu pandemic. They cannot predict when this will happen, but urge everyone to take steps now to prepare. Here's some general information about pandemic flu and what you can do to **prevent, prepare** for and **protect** yourself against it.

A pandemic is a disease outbreak that spreads worldwide. This happens when a new disease appears that spreads easily from person to person.



It is difficult to get people to take the risk of a flu pandemic seriously. Most of us don't think of the flu as a dangerous infection – it's seasonal, we rarely catch it, but when we do many of us recover.

Yet, the flu virus changes frequently and spreads very easily. Sometimes dangerous new flu strains come along that humans have no immunity to. They can cause widespread illness, death, fear, and social and economic chaos.



A look into the past shows that flu pandemics are part of human history. They seem to happen about three to four times a century. But there's no pattern that helps us to predict when the next one will occur or what will cause it.



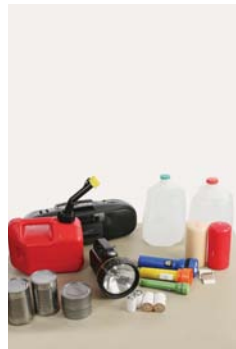
Triggers can be a sudden change in the human flu virus, the mixing of animal and human strains of flu, or when an animal flu virus jumps the species barrier and infects a human. In each case, a new strain of flu can develop. If it is able to spread easily between humans, it could mark the start of a pandemic.

Canadians experienced three flu pandemics in the 20th century: the devastating 1918 outbreak followed by less severe ones in 1957 and 1968. We will face another flu pandemic. The question is: are we prepared to cope with it?



We need to begin by taking this risk seriously and then learning what we can do about it. There are some very simple actions each of us can take in our daily lives that will help us be prepared.

1. Prevent the spread of the flu: cover your sneeze and cough; wash your hands with soap and running water to remove germs; try not to touch your nose, mouth and eyes (these are places where infections can enter your body); and try to get the flu shot every fall.



2. Prepare to cope in an emergency like a flu pandemic: get informed and stay informed; think how you'd cope if services were reduced; prepare a supply of water, food and medicine at home; keep useful phone numbers and health information handy; share your ideas with others.



3. Protect your health during a flu pandemic: Take steps to prevent the spread of flu germs; watch out for signs of the flu; learn how to treat the flu at home; know when you need to get medical help for pandemic flu.

These commonsense measures can help you stay healthy, prepare for an emergency, and protect your health during a flu pandemic.



For more information, visit www.pandemic.cpha.ca. There you'll find the *Flu Pandemic Communications Toolkit*: factual, plain language information with practical guidelines that Canadians can apply in their everyday lives.

The *Flu Pandemic Communications Toolkit* was developed by the Canadian Public Health Association and the Pandemic Health Alert Network, with funding from the Public Health Agency of Canada.

For more information, go to www.pandemic.cpha.ca or call 1-800-454-8302.