

Pandemic Influenza Questions and Answers

What is influenza (the flu)?

Influenza is a respiratory illness that causes fever, headache, body ache, cough and extreme tiredness in people.

What is seasonal influenza?

Also known as the common flu, seasonal influenza occurs nearly every year. Each year, 10-20% of the US population becomes ill with the flu and about 36,000 people die from the flu or its complications. Vaccines are available to prevent people from getting the common flu.

What is avian influenza?

Avian influenza or bird flu is caused by a group of highly contagious flu viruses that are found naturally among birds. There are ongoing outbreaks of a type of bird flu virus, H5N1, among wild birds and domestic poultry in many countries around the world. On rare occasion, the H5N1 virus has infected people. Over 200 human cases have occurred worldwide since 2003. This virus does not pass easily from person-to-person. Close contact with sick birds is the main route of infection in humans.

What is pandemic influenza?

Pandemic influenza describes a worldwide outbreak of flu in people. It is caused by a new flu virus to which humans have no immunity. A new flu virus could result from changes to a bird (or other non-human) virus. These changes have not yet occurred with the H5N1 bird flu virus. **There is no human flu pandemic right now.**

What are the signs and symptoms of pandemic influenza?

Symptoms are similar to seasonal flu but may be more severe:

<input type="checkbox"/> Fever	<input type="checkbox"/> Headache
<input type="checkbox"/> Dry cough	<input type="checkbox"/> Extreme tiredness
<input type="checkbox"/> Sore throat	<input type="checkbox"/> Runny nose
<input type="checkbox"/> Muscle aches	<input type="checkbox"/> Nausea
<input type="checkbox"/> Vomiting	<input type="checkbox"/> Diarrhea

How is pandemic influenza different from seasonal influenza?

Seasonal flu occurs every year, and vaccines are available to protect people from seasonal flu. Pandemic flu occurs rarely, but may cause more severe illness and result in more deaths than seasonal flu. No vaccines exist for pandemic flu.

How is pandemic influenza different from avian influenza?

Bird flu is caused by viruses that primarily affect birds. Bird flu is highly contagious among birds but rarely cause sickness in people. Pandemic flu is a worldwide outbreak of highly contagious flu among people.

Pandemic Influenza Questions and Answers

How is pandemic influenza spread?

Similar to seasonal flu, pandemic flu is spread from person to person through coughs and sneezes. This can happen when droplets from the cough or sneeze of a sick person travel through air and reach the mouth or nose of a person nearby. Pandemic flu can also be spread when a person touches respiratory droplets left behind on an object or surface by a sick person, and then touches his/her own (or someone else's) mouth or nose before hand washing.

How can I protect myself and my family from getting sick during a pandemic?

- Wash your hands frequently and thoroughly with soap and water.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes.
- Stay home when you're sick.
- Do not share used/dirty utensils.

How likely is it that we will see a pandemic flu in our lifetime?

No one can predict when a pandemic will occur or how severe it will be. A pandemic has occurred on average every 30 to 40 years (range 10 to 50) over the last 400 years. The deadliest pandemic in recent history occurred in 1918. The most recent flu pandemic, milder than the 1918 pandemic, occurred in 1968.

How will we know when a new influenza virus is identified?

Public health authorities around the world are working together to test and share information about influenza viruses. In the US, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), working with state public health agencies, is actively monitoring influenza activity in this country.

What are federal, state and local public health agencies doing to prepare for pandemic influenza?

The US Department of Health and Human Services, public health agencies at the state (such as Oregon State Public Health Division) and local levels (such as Washington County Department of Health and Human Services) have developed or are working on emergency plans to respond to a pandemic. State and local health departments are also working with healthcare facilities, businesses, faith-based organizations and other community groups to help them prepare for pandemic flu.

Pandemic Influenza Questions and Answers

Where can I find more information about pandemic flu?

- US federal government website: www.flu.gov/
- World Health Organization (WHO) website: <http://www.who.int/influenza/en/>

Where can I find more information about bird flu?

- US Department of Agriculture (USDA):
www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usdahome?navtype=SU&navid=AVIAN_INFLUENZA
- US Geological Survey (USGS):
www.nwhc.usgs.gov/disease_information/avian_influenza/index.jsp
- National Defense University, Center for Technology and National Security Policy, Bird Flu and You posters: <http://www.garretthealth.org/pdfs/BirdFluandyou%20Big%20Final.pdf>

Where can I find more information about healthy habits?

- CDC – Stopping the Germ at Home, Work and School:
www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/stopgerms.htm
- National Science Foundation (NSF) Scrub Club website: www.scrubclub.org
- School Network for Absenteeism Prevention, It's a SNAP website:
www.itsasnap.org/snap/about.asp
- CDC – Germ Stopper posters: <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/schools/toolkit/posters.htm>

Where can I find bird flu and pandemic flu information in languages other than English?

- US Center for Disease Control and Prevention, avian flu information in different languages:
www.cdc.gov/flu/avian/