

Pandemics

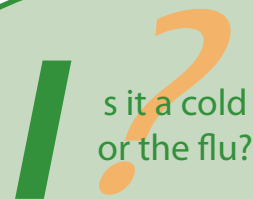
Respiratory infections affect the nose, throat and lungs. They include influenza (the flu), colds, whooping cough, and severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS). Germs (viruses and bacteria) that cause these infections are spread from person to person in droplets from the nose, throat and lungs of someone who is sick. You can help stop the spread of these germs by using good health manners and respiratory etiquette.

A pandemic is a global disease outbreak. A flu pandemic occurs when a new influenza virus emerges for which people have little or no immunity, and for which there is no vaccine. The disease spreads easily person-to-person, causes serious illness, and can sweep across the country and around the world in very short time.

It is difficult to predict when the next influenza pandemic will occur or how severe it will be. Wherever and whenever a pandemic starts, everyone around the world is at risk. Countries might, through measures such as border closures and travel restrictions, delay arrival of the virus, but cannot stop it.

Most people can treat the flu at home. However, you should seek medical attention if you have the following symptoms:

- Severe or prolonged symptoms, lasting 10 or more days
- Difficult, rapid or painful breathing
- Bluish skin
- Dizziness or fainting
- Return of fever or cough after symptoms have improved
- Dehydration
- Cough with yellow mucus or saliva
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Worsening of an existing serious medical condition



Signs and symptoms of the flu can include:

- Fever of 102-104 degrees lasting three-four days
- Headache
- Severe muscle aches
- General weakness, extreme fatigue
- Dry cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Occasionally, nausea, vomiting and diarrhea

What to do before a pandemic:

- Have a disaster kit and a plan to care for children and the elderly.
- Have a plan to work from home if possible.
- Keep all immunizations up to date.
- Practice and teach healthy habits like covering mouths when sneezing and hand washing.
- Begin social isolation by staying away from large crowds.

What to do during a pandemic:

- Follow the directions of local authorities.
- Social isolation should be practiced.

What to do after a pandemic:

- Follow the directions of local authorities.

Protect Yourself and Your Family

- Cover your cough and sneeze with tissues, dispose of them properly, and then wash your hands.
- Wash your hands often and well.
- Stay at home if you are ill and minimize exposure to sick persons by staying 3-6 feet away.
- Regularly disinfect common surfaces such as phones, remote controls, door knobs, light switches, and toys.
- Get vaccinated yearly.