

Government pandemic planning

A 1918 pandemic killed tens of millions of people worldwide and disrupted everyday life. The current pandemic caused by novel H1N1 influenza — formerly known as swine flu — is mild, much like pandemics in 1957 and 1968. However, viruses can change, and no one can predict if or how they might change. So, we need to be ready. We can't afford not to be.

The federal and state government have adopted plans for dealing with pandemic flu. State and local agencies are working with the private sector to do a number of different jobs:

- The **Department of Public Safety** (www.dps.state.mn.us) is responsible for organizing and coordinating our overall response to a pandemic.
- The **Minnesota Department of Education** (www.education.state.mn.us) is working closely with the Minnesota Department of Health on communicating with schools about prevention efforts and influenza activity in their communities.
- The **Minnesota Department of Health** (www.health.state.mn.us) — along with local health agencies and health-care providers across the state — work to minimize the impact of a pandemic on human health.



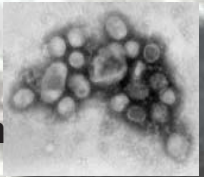
People cannot get H1N1 by eating cooked pork.

DON'T CATCH IT
Flu
DON'T SPREAD IT

Hoping for the best ...

ready for the worst

**Pandemic
influenza in
Minnesota**



For more information:

Visit the Minnesota Department of
Health Web site at

www.health.state.mn.us



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What is pandemic flu?

An influenza pandemic is a large outbreak of flu that usually spreads across the globe. This can happen when the virus that causes flu suddenly changes in a major way.

Unlike regular flu, a pandemic virus can show up and spread rapidly any time of year. All flu can cause serious illness, especially among young children and elderly people, and all flu viruses change over time. This is why you need a flu shot every fall — to protect against the flu strains circulating each flu season.



Usually, viruses change gradually. One year's flu virus is similar to the previous year's virus. This can give people some immunity. When the change is drastic, most



people have little or no immunity to the new virus. If the new virus is powerful, like the one in 1918, it

can make even healthy young adults very ill. Making vaccine for a new virus takes several months. Then, it still must be manufactured and distributed, which also takes time.

Antiviral drugs may or may not offer some relief until a vaccine is available. However, they do not prevent complications.

Protecting yourself, your family and your community

You can start now to develop habits to help keep you from catching and spreading infectious diseases.

Be smoke free. Stay healthy. Get and stay in shape. Eat nutritious foods. Exercise regularly. Get enough sleep.

Get a flu shot every fall to protect against “seasonal” flu.



Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue or the upper part of your sleeve — not with your hand — when you cough or sneeze. Throw the used tissue in the trash or toilet.



Wash your hands thoroughly — and often. Keep unwashed hands away from your eyes and mouth. Carry an alcohol-based, waterless hand sanitizer for times when you do not have access to soap and water.



Make a plan

Plan what you will do if you or others in your family become ill or if schools close for an extended time. Keep a list of family members' medical conditions and prescription medicines. Keep it updated and handy, along with a list of emergency telephone numbers, your clinic number and health insurance information.

Make an emergency kit

Fill boxes or plastic bins with everything you need to stay home, possibly for up to two weeks. Include:

- Non-perishable food, water and juice.
- Personal care products — soap, toiletries, waterless hand sanitizer, tissues and toilet paper, tooth brushes and any special items for infants, people with special health needs and pets.
- Medicine — over-the-counter drugs to help ease symptoms of flu, other illnesses and aches and pains. Also keep enough of prescription medicines on hand.
- Dish-washing and laundry supplies.
- Useful miscellaneous items — notebook and pen, batteries, whistle, extra checks, medical and insurance information and copies of other important documents.
- Games, reading material and other entertainment items for children and adults.



Tools for making emergency plans and kits are available on the MDH Web site at www.health.state.mn.us.

Government is better prepared for flu today than it was yesterday, and we will be better prepared tomorrow than we were today.

What about you?