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About Pandemic Influenza

PURPOSE

- An influenza pandemic is a global outbreak of a new influenza A virus that is very different from current and recently circulating human seasonal influenza A viruses.
- Pandemics happen when new (novel) influenza A viruses emerge which are able to infect people easily and spread from person to person in an efficient and sustained way.

Pandemic Basics

Because the virus is new to humans, very few people will have immunity against the pandemic virus, and a vaccine might not be widely available. The new virus will make a lot of people sick. How sick people get will depend on the characteristics of the virus, whether or not people have any immunity to that virus, and the health and age of the person being infected. With seasonal flu, for example, certain chronic health conditions are known to make those people more susceptible to serious flu infections. The risk factors associated with seasonal flu can be found at "[People at High Risk of Developing Flu-Related Complications](#)." Influenza pandemics are uncommon; only occurred during the 20th century.

	Seasonal Flu	Pandemic Flu
How often does it happen?	Happens annually and usually peaks between December and February	Rarely happens (three times in 20th century)
Will most people be immune?	Usually some immunity from previous exposures and influenza vaccination	Most people have little or no immunity because they have no previous exposure to the virus or similar viruses
Who is at risk for complications?	Certain people are at high-risk for serious complications (infants, elderly, pregnant women, extreme obesity and persons with certain chronic medical conditions)	Healthy people also may be at high risk for serious complications
Where can I get medical care?	Health care providers and hospitals can usually meet public and patient needs	Health care providers and hospitals may be overwhelmed Alternate care sites may be available to meet public and patient needs
Will a vaccine be available?	Vaccine available for annual flu season Usually, one dose of vaccine is needed for most people	Although the US government maintains a limited stockpile of pandemic vaccine, vaccine may not be available in the early stages of a pandemic Two doses of vaccine may be needed
Will antivirals be available?	Adequate supplies of antivirals are usually available	Antiviral supply may not be adequate to meet demand
How many people could get sick and suffer complications?	Rates of medical visits, complications, hospitalizations and death can vary from low to high CDC estimates that flu-related hospitalizations since 2010 ranged from 140,000 to 710,000, while flu-related	Rates of medical visits, complications, hospitalizations and death can range from moderate to high Number of deaths could be much higher than seasonal flu (e.g. The estimated U.S.

deaths are estimated to have ranged from 12,000 to 56,000.

death toll during the 1918 pandemic was approximately 675,000)

What impact will it have on schools and workplaces?

Usually causes minor impact on the general public, some schools may close and sick people are encouraged to stay home
Manageable impact on domestic and world economies

May cause major impact on the general public, such as travel restrictions and school or business closings
Potential for severe impact on domestic and world economies



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Seasonal Flu vs. Pandemic Flu

Influenza is one of the world's greatest infectious disease challenges. But did you know that seasonal flu and pandemic flu are not the same?

What is seasonal flu?



Influenza (flu) is a contagious respiratory illness caused by flu A and B viruses that infect the human respiratory tract. Annual flu epidemics occur among people worldwide.

How often do seasonal flu epidemics occur?



Epidemics of seasonal flu happen every year. Fall and winter is the time for flu in the United States.

How do seasonal flu viruses spread?



Flu viruses are thought to spread mainly from person to person through droplets made when someone with flu coughs, sneezes, or talks near a person (within 6 feet).

Is there a vaccine for seasonal flu?



Seasonal flu vaccines are made each year to vaccinate people against seasonal flu. Everyone 6 months and older should get a flu vaccine every year. For most people, only one dose of vaccine is needed.

What is pandemic flu?



A flu pandemic is a global outbreak of a new flu A virus in people that is very different from current and recently circulating seasonal flu A viruses.

How often do flu pandemics occur?

Flu pandemics happen rarely. Four flu pandemics have happened in the past 100 years, but experts agree another one is inevitable.



How do pandemic flu viruses spread?



Pandemic flu viruses would spread in the same way as seasonal flu, but a pandemic virus will likely infect more people because few people have immunity to the pandemic flu virus.

Is there a vaccine for pandemic flu?



Although the U.S. government maintains a limited stockpile of some pre-pandemic flu vaccines, vaccine may not be widely available in the early stages of a pandemic. Two doses of pandemic flu vaccine will

likely be needed.

Are there medications to treat seasonal flu?



Prescription medications called antiviral drugs can treat seasonal flu. During a severe flu season, there can be spot shortages of these drugs.

Are there medications to treat pandemic flu?



Flu antiviral medications may be used to treat pandemic flu if the virus is susceptible to these drugs. While a limited amount of flu antiviral drugs are stockpiled for use during a pandemic, supplies may not be enough to meet demand during a pandemic.

Who is at risk for complications from seasonal flu?



Young children, people 65 years and older, pregnant women, and people with certain long-term medical conditions are more likely to have serious flu complications.

Who is at risk for complications from pandemic flu?



Because this is a new virus not previously circulating in humans, it's not possible to predict who would be most at risk of severe complications in a future pandemic. In some past pandemics, healthy young adults were at high risk for developing severe flu complications.



<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/pandemic-resources/basics/about.html>

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SOURCES

CONTENT SOURCE:

National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases (NCIRD)

