

# What You Should Know

Pandemic influenza (flu) is a worldwide outbreak of a new flu virus for which there is little or no immunity (protection) in the human population. Scientists and health professionals are concerned that the current virus in birds (avian flu) may develop into the next human pandemic. Pandemic flu can spread easily from person to person causing serious illness and death. Pandemic flu may create a public health emergency. This emergency will not be like anything we have faced before. A pandemic will last longer, make more people seriously ill and may cause more deaths than any other health crisis in our time.

A long-lasting and widespread outbreak of the disease could mean changes in many areas of our lives. Schools might need to temporarily close. Public transportation could be limited and air travel restricted. Many employees may be too sick to work and many businesses and public services may have to close or limit services.

## About Avian Flu

Avian influenza (flu) is also known as bird flu. A non-human flu virus causes this infection in birds. Bird flu is very contagious among birds and can make some domesticated birds – like chickens and ducks – very sick and even kill them.

Bird flu viruses do not usually infect humans, but this latest outbreak has infected some people. People get bird flu from contact with infected birds. Infected birds shed the virus in saliva and feces. When the illness infects people, it is very serious and over half the people sick with bird flu have died. It has not been found in birds or people in the United States (as of Spring 2008).

People may get the virus by eating undercooked infected poultry. You cannot get the virus by eating properly cooked poultry or eggs, so be sure your poultry is fully cooked.

Scientists and health professionals are concerned about bird flu because the current virus in birds may change and develop into a virus that will easily spread from one person to another, causing the next pandemic in humans.

There is no vaccine for bird flu. To protect yourself against bird flu, health officials recommend taking the same steps you would to protect yourself against any other flu or cold. (See “What You Can Do”).

# Your Pandemic Flu Emergency Kit

One in three people could get sick during a pandemic, with many of them seriously ill. The services and supplies we count on may not be available. Every individual and family could be on their own, without care, for quite a while. This makes being prepared even more important.

Because everyday life may be different during a pandemic flu and services could be disrupted, make sure you have these items in your emergency preparedness kit. Stockpile NOW.

- Two weeks worth of food for you and your family. This should be food that does not need refrigeration. Foods like canned meats and fish, beans, soups, fruits, and dry goods like flour, salt, and sugar are good choices.
- Water stored in sealed, unbreakable containers. If water service is disrupted, plan on one gallon for each person for each day, for up to two weeks. (14 gallons per person)
- Two weeks worth of prescription medicines.
- Two weeks worth of ibuprofen or acetaminophen (Tylenol) for each person in the house for fever and pain. A two-week supply of a cough medicine recommended by a pharmacist.
- Rehydration Solution, e.g., Pedialyte for kids, Gatorade for adults and teens. *Please see the instructions to make a rehydration solution for adults and teens.* For children, especially infants and toddlers, a store-bought solution is strongly recommended.
- Cell phone and charger.
- Supply of face masks and plastic gloves. These will help protect you, especially if you are taking care of family members sick with the disease.
- Disinfectants and chlorine bleach.

You can get more information regarding putting together a complete **Emergency Preparedness Plan** and **Kit** from the American Red Cross. Call **607-753-1182** or visit their web site at [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org).

# Seasonal Flu vs. Pandemic Flu

## Key differences between seasonal flu and pandemic flu

### Seasonal Flu

- Usually follows a predictable pattern, typically every year in the winter. There is usually some immunity present.
- Healthy adults are not usually at risk for any serious complications.
- The medical community can usually meet public and patient needs.
- Vaccines are developed before the flu season, based on known virus strains.
- Supplies of antiviral drugs are usually available.
- Average number of flu-related deaths in the US is about 36,000 a year.
- Regular flu symptoms: fever, cough, and muscle aches.
- Small impact on the community with sick people staying home from work and school.
- Small impact on the economy.

### Pandemic Flu

- Happened only three times in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. A new pandemic flu hasn't been seen before, there is little or no immunity. Not seasonal.
- Even healthy people may be at risk for serious complications.
- The medical community will be overwhelmed.
- Vaccine developed early may not be effective. Once an effective vaccine is developed, it may not be available for many months.
- May not have any effective antiviral drugs; supply may be limited.
- The number of deaths would be much higher; worldwide it could be millions.
- Symptoms may be more serious with more medical complications.
- Could have a big impact on the community, including cancellation of public gatherings.
- Could have a big impact on the economy.

## Rehydration Solution for Adults & Teens

4 cups water  
2 tablespoons sugar  
½ teaspoon salt

**Mix all the ingredients until the sugar disappears. You can drink the solution at room temperature. Please note: Do not boil the solution because that will reduce the solution's helpfulness.**

## What You Can Do

*Preparing for a pandemic flu can reduce your chance of getting sick and can help limit the spread of disease*

Stay healthy by eating a balanced diet, exercising daily, getting enough rest and drinking fluids. Get your seasonal flu shot.

Stay informed through the media and the internet.

# Preparing for Pandemic Flu

## Cortland County Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC)

**Keep up-to-date about pandemic flu through the media and/or go to:**

[www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) for general information about pandemic flu and other health-related information.

**CDC Hotline:** 24 hours/7 days  
1-800-232-4636

[www.nyhealth.gov](http://www.nyhealth.gov) for information on New York State's plan.

[www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org) for information you will need to make your own emergency preparedness plan.

[www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov) for updates on national and international pandemic flu and preparedness checklists.

## Using common sense, Please...

- Wash hands often for 20 seconds using soap and water.
- Cover coughs and sneezes with tissues. Cough or sneeze into your sleeve, instead of your hands.  
Put used tissues in the trash and then wash your hands.
- If you get sick, stay home and away from others.
- Don't send sick children to school.
- Avoid contact with people who are sick.

# During A Pandemic Flu

Here are some things you will need to know during a pandemic flu. Please remember, information will change during a pandemic and it will be important to keep up-to-date and follow public health orders.

## Public Health Instructions

Throughout a pandemic, you may be asked or required to do things to slow the spread of the disease in our community. If local public health officials or your healthcare provider asks you to take certain actions, follow those instructions.

**Here are some examples of what you may be asked or required to do.**

When you are sick, stay home. Children should not go to school if they are sick. Staying home will be absolutely necessary during a pandemic to limit the spread of the disease.

Even though you may be healthy, you could be asked to stay away from gatherings of people such as sporting events, movies and festivals. During a pandemic, events like these could be cancelled because large gatherings of people help spread the flu virus.

Isolation and quarantine are public health actions used to contain the spread of a contagious disease. If asked, it will be important to follow isolation and/or quarantine instructions.

**ISOLATION** is for people who are already ill. When someone is isolated, they are separated from healthy people. Having the sick person isolated can help to slow or stop the spread of disease. People who are isolated can be cared for in their homes or in healthcare facilities. Isolation is usually voluntary, but governments have the power to require isolation of sick people to protect the public.

**QUARANTINE** is for people who have been exposed to the disease but are not sick. When someone is placed in quarantine, they are also separated from others. Even though the person is not sick at the moment, they were exposed to the disease and may become infectious and spread the disease to others. Quarantine can help to slow or stop this from happening. Governments have the power to enforce quarantines.

## Emergency Medical Care

During a pandemic flu, it will be important NOT to go to the hospital except in the case of a medical emergency. Hospitals will be overwhelmed with patients and many sick people may have to be cared for at home or at a non-hospital location.

# Important Phone Numbers

The following are numbers for preparedness information.

**Cortland Fire and Emergency Management 607-753-5065**

**Cortland County Health Department 607-753-5036**

**American Red Cross 607-753-1182**

## Getting Information

Local radio and television stations will provide information during a pandemic flu. In some instances, specific emergency instructions will be broadcast by:

WIII/I-100 607-257-6400

WXHC 101.5 607-749-9942

Time Warner Cable TV Channel 2 607-756-2500

Local information will be available on the following websites:

[www.cortland.org](http://www.cortland.org)

[www.cortland-co.org](http://www.cortland-co.org)

People enrolled in NY Alert will receive periodic updates. To enroll now, go to [www.NYAlert.gov](http://www.NYAlert.gov).

During a pandemic, emergency instructions may include cancellation of events, closing of schools and businesses and other ways to protect your health.

Call 911 only in the event of a serious, life-threatening emergency. But remember, because a pandemic could be bigger than any other health emergency, 911 may be overwhelmed by the number of calls.

# Prevent the Spread of Disease at Home

*If you or a household member becomes ill during a pandemic and are being cared for at home, follow these instructions to control the spread of disease in the home.*

**Isolate the ill person *WITHIN* your home.**

- The person who is ill should not leave the house unless they are being taken to a medical appointment. The sick person will have to stay home for a period of time after their symptoms begin, even if they are feeling better. Do not have visitors during this time.
- Designate a room(s) only for the ill person(s) separate from other household members. The room(s) should have a door that can be closed.
- The ill person should wear a protective mask when anyone is in the same room or car. People in the room or car with the ill person should also wear a protective mask. Disposable gloves should be used when cleaning or disinfecting any room or area where the sick person has been.

**Wash hands with soap or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer.**

- Everyone in the household – and it is important to remind children – should wash their hands with soap for 20 seconds between contact with others, before preparing food, and before eating.
- Wash hands for 20 seconds after touching tissues or surfaces soiled with saliva or nose drainage. Use disposable gloves if available.

**Keep the household environment clean.**

- The flu virus can live on surfaces for many hours.
- On a regular basis, clean surfaces and commonly shared items like microwaves, refrigerator handles, phones, remote controls, doorknobs, toilet seats and handles, faucets, light switches and toys. Use a labeled household disinfectant or chlorine bleach mixture (see below). Let air dry.
- Store-brand chlorine bleach can be used as a disinfectant. Prepare by mixing ¼ cup chlorine bleach with 1 gallon of cool water.

**Cover your nose and mouth when sneezing or coughing.**

- Remind children and others to cover their nose and mouth with a tissue when sneezing or coughing, or to sneeze or cough into their sleeve. Put used tissues in a wastebasket and then wash hands with soap or use an alcohol-based sanitizer.
- Even when a person is wearing a mask, they should cough or sneeze into their sleeve.

**Watch all household members for symptoms of respiratory illness.**

- If a fever or other symptoms such as chills, cough, sore throat, headache, or muscle aches develop, immediately isolate the sick person.

**Make sure supplies are on-hand. Stockpile NOW.**

- Keep supplies of masks, gloves, soap, tissues, paper towels and cleaning supplies on hand.
- Make sure all sinks and restrooms are stocked with soap and paper towels.
- Make sure that tissues are available in all rooms.