

# Seasonal Flu vs. Pandemic Flu

## Know the Difference

### Seasonal Flu



- ▶ Outbreaks occur each year, mostly in the winter.
- ▶ The viruses that cause seasonal flu are like the ones from the past few years. That's why many people can fight off the illness.
- ▶ Not all people who get sick will need to go to the hospital, so there is space for those who are really sick.
- ▶ Healthy adults usually don't get very sick. The very young, the elderly, and people with chronic health problems could get extremely ill.
- ▶ A flu vaccine (flu shot or nasal spray) is made each year that works well to stop the spread of seasonal flu.
- ▶ It takes about 2 days to get sick after contact with the seasonal flu virus. A person can start to spread seasonal flu to others about 1 day before they feel sick, and up to 5 days after becoming sick.
- ▶ Getting a flu shot or the nasal spray each year is the best way to protect yourself from seasonal flu.

### How you can slow the spread of germs

Stay home when sick

Cover your coughs and sneezes

Clean your hands



- ▶ Does not happen often.
- ▶ Because the virus is new, many more people are likely to get sick after being exposed.
- ▶ So many people will get sick that hospitals and health care providers may not be able to handle all the people who need care.
- ▶ People of any age and even healthy people could get very ill.
- ▶ A vaccine for pandemic flu may not be available when pandemic flu first breaks out. It may take 4 to 6 months to make the first doses of pandemic-specific vaccine.
- ▶ No one knows for sure how fast pandemic flu will make a person sick or spread to others.



[www.publichealth.va.gov/InfectionDontPassItOn](http://www.publichealth.va.gov/InfectionDontPassItOn)

