

Know the Difference

Seasonal Flu	Pandemic Flu
Outbreaks occur each year, mostly in winter.	Does not happen often (only three times in 20th century).
Seasonal flu virus is like ones from the past few years. That's why many people can fight off the illness.	Because the virus is new, many more people are likely to get sick after they are exposed to it.
Not all people get sick, so there is space in hospitals for those who are really sick.	So many people will get sick that hospitals may not be able to handle all the people who need care.
Healthy adults usually don't get very sick. The very young, the elderly, and people with chronic health problems could get really ill.	People of any age and even healthy people could get really ill.
A vaccine for flu shots and the nasal spray is made each year that works well to stop the spread of seasonal flu.	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 the pandemic-specific vaccine.
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.	No one knows for sure how fast pandemic flu will make a person sick or spread to others. It is expected that it will be similar to seasonal flu.
Getting a yearly flu shot or the nasal spray is the best way to protect yourself from seasonal flu. Wash hands often and keep them away from your eyes, nose, and mouth. Staying home when sick will also help to control the spread of seasonal flu.	Because a vaccine for pandemic flu may not be ready when the pandemic first breaks out. People should protect themselves and others by washing hands and keeping them away from their eyes, nose, and mouth. People should stay home when they are sick. This may help to control the spread of the virus.

What is Avian Flu?

You may also have heard avian flu called "bird flu." Here are some facts about avian flu:

Avian flu or bird flu refers to a group of flu viruses that mainly affect birds. You will sometimes hear it called H5N1 flu virus. H5N1 flu virus is one type of avian flu virus.

It is rare, but these bird flu viruses may spread to humans, such as the cases you may have heard about in the news.

At this time, bird flu is spreading among birds and in a few cases, from birds to humans.

Remember, a flu pandemic happens when a new flu virus begins to spread easily from person to person and then spreads around the world. If this happens with bird flu, it could cause a flu pandemic.



Infection: Don't Pass It On Team

U. S. Department of Veterans Affairs
 VA Central Office (13)
 810 Vermont Ave, NW
 Washington, DC 20420
 (202) 273-8567
www.publichealth.va.gov/flu/pandemicflu.htm
vwww.vhaco.va.gov/phshcg/Flu/pandemicflu.htm
 (VA staff only)
www.pandemicflu.gov



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Pandemic Flu

General Information



This information is provided by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) for veterans, their families, friends, volunteers, and employees.

What is Pandemic Influenza (Flu)?

Influenza is an illness from a virus that causes fever, coughing, muscle aches, and other symptoms, that we refer to as “flu.”

A flu pandemic occurs when a new flu virus spreads to people all over the world.

“Pandemic flu” is not the same as “seasonal flu.” Illness from seasonal flu occurs every year, usually in winter months. People can protect themselves from seasonal flu by getting flu vaccine (a “flu shot” or nasal spray as recommended by one’s healthcare provider).

Pandemic flu might make people sicker than seasonal flu and might spread easily to others because there would be no vaccine at first.

In the past, flu pandemics were given names. You may have heard of the 1918 “Spanish flu,” “Asian flu” in 1957, or “Hong Kong flu” in 1968.

New information will become available - stay informed by visiting www.pandemicflu.gov.

Stay Informed With Reliable Sources

How would Pandemic Flu Spread?

Pandemic flu may spread the same way as seasonal flu, BUT we will not know until it happens.

Flu viruses are spread from person to person when:

Flu germs get into the air from coughs or sneezes and people nearby inhale the germs

Cover your coughs & sneezes

People do not wash their hands after touching objects used or touched by persons who may have the flu

Clean your hands



What are Possible Symptoms of Pandemic Flu?

Until a “new” flu virus causes a pandemic, the symptoms are not known. We expect those symptoms to be like those of the seasonal flu illness, but may be worse. Additional symptoms could occur.

Usual symptoms of seasonal flu are:

Fever (usually high)

Headache

Tiredness (can be extreme)

Cough

Sore throat

Runny or stuffy nose

Body aches

Nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea (more in children than adults)



Where Can I Learn More?

Your healthcare provider

Your local VA

On these Web sites

www.publichealth.va.gov/Flu/pandemicflu.htm

vaww.vhaco.va.gov/phshcg/Flu/pandemicflu.htm
(VA staff only)

← www.pandemicflu.gov

Local and national news

