

Seasonal Flu, Pandemic Flu, and You

What SC Staff Should Know and Be Prepared For

August 2, 2018¹

Seasonal flu

Although most people recover from flu at home without medical care, even healthy children and younger adults can get very sick, and can spread the flu to friends, co-workers, and family. We therefore suggest that:

If flu is present in your area:

- You promptly consult a health care provider for anyone with flu-like symptoms who is at greater risk of serious flu-related complications, and for anyone who has any “emergency warning signs.” (Please see the CDC 2-pager “Flu & You,” at: <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/freeresources/print-general.htm>, & “The Flu: Caring for Someone Sick at Home,” 24 pages, at: <https://www.savethechildren.org/content/dam/global/reports/emergency-preparation-disaster-risk-reduction/flu-home-care-cdc-2013.pdf>).
- Anyone who has, either a fever (100F / 38C, or higher) or chills, and also has either a cough or sore throat, stay home (except to seek medical care), until the fever has been gone for at least 24 hours (while no longer using a fever-reducing medicine). This helps reduce transmission of flu among people.
- If flu immunization is available in your area, consider immunization for everyone 6 months of age and older, particularly for those at greater risk of serious flu-related complications and for those living with or caring for those at greater risk. (It is best to get immunized before the start of your local flu season.)

Pandemic flu

Influenza pandemics are worldwide epidemics caused by new flu viruses which evolve from birds or animals to allow sustained person-to-person respiratory transmission. Since the 16th century, there has been an average of about three flu pandemics per century. While the 1918 pandemic is estimated to have killed 50 to 100 million people, the most recent pandemic, the 2009 “swine flu,” was very much milder.

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The concern today is that another virus, such as the H5N1 or H7N9 avian flu virus (or the MERS coronavirus) could evolve to cause a severe pandemic. In such an event, vaccine and antiviral treatment would likely be unavailable for much or all of the world's population during at least the first several months. Although risk of onset in the next year, or in the next decade, of a severe pandemic involving sustained person-to-person respiratory transmission of a novel virus cannot be quantified, such an event is considered to be an important global threat by leading organizations.²

Please refer to the following resources for more information on influenza and pandemic threats:

For Save the Children information & guidance on influenza & pandemic threats

- SC/US staff: <https://savechildrenusa.sharepoint.com/gss/Pages/AvianFluUpdates.aspx>
- SC/US external site: <https://www.savethechildren.org/us/about-us/resource-library/influenza-library>

For US-based staff: Authoritative updates on the global/US situation & official guidance

- www.cdc.gov/flu/ & <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices> US CDC

For staff living outside the US: Authoritative updates on the global situation & official guidance

- www.who.int/topics/influenza/en/ & www.who.int/ith/en/ World Health Organization
- <http://ecdc.europa.eu/en/> European CDC
- <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel/emergencies/options-during-pandemic.html> US State Dep.

Please send any question or comments you may have to all four of the following SC Pandemic Point Persons: Eric Starbuck at estarbuck@savechildren.org, Kathryn Bolles at kbolles@savechildren.org, Jeanne Koepsell at jkoepsell@savechildren.org, and Emma Diggle at e.diggle@savethechildren.org.uk.

² See:

- The World Development Report 2014, The World Bank, pages 248-249 (http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTNWDR2013/Resources/8258024-1352909193861/8936935-1356011448215/8986901-1380046989056/07a--Spotlight_7.pdf);
- Statement for the Record: Worldwide Threat Assessment of the US Intelligence Community, Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, January 29, 2014, page 12 (http://www.dni.gov/files/documents/Intelligence%20Reports/2014%20WWTA%20%20SFR_SS_CI_29_Jan.pdf);
- Warning signals from the volatile world of influenza viruses, WHO, February 2015 (<http://www.who.int/influenza/publications/warningsignals201502/en/>);
- National Risk Register of Civil Emergencies, UK Cabinet Office, March 2015 (https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/419549/201503_31_2015-NRR-WA_Final.pdf); &
- What Bill Gates is afraid of, Vox, May 2015 (4 ½ minute video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9AEMKudv5p0>)