



# Pandemic **FLU** ACTION KIT

For **Schools** in  
**New York State**

New York State  
Department of Health

 **AWARE  
PREPARE**  
KNOWLEDGE IS POWER.



*Developed from materials provided by the Contra Costa, CA, Health Services and the Contra Costa County Department of Education; New York State Department of Health; Orange County, CA, Department of Education; Washington County, OR Department of Health and Human Services; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Department of Health and Human Services and the American Red Cross.*

The *Pandemic Flu Action Kit for Schools in New York State* was developed by staff from the New York State Department of Health, the New York State Education Department, and a workgroup representing Local Health Departments in New York State.

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## IMPORTANT NOTICE TO USERS

This ***“Pandemic Influenza Action Kit for Schools in New York State”*** is based, in part, on the “School Action Kit” produced by the Contra Costa County Health Department, Contra Costa, California. Many thanks to the Contra Costa Health Department for giving us permission to adapt their work.

It is important to stress that numerous elements of our kit have been revised to reflect circumstances and/or planning assumptions specific to New York State. For instance, we expect that school closures could last up to 12 weeks in an influenza pandemic—the Contra Costa kit suggests planning for six-week closures. Our parent information also makes a clear distinction between highly pathogenic H5N1 avian influenza and pandemic influenza, which is reflected in our sample letter to parents for distribution when the highly pathogenic H5N1 virus is first found in birds in the United States. The New York version of the School Action Kit also includes educational materials that support our State’s ongoing social marketing efforts targeted at pandemic influenza, in addition to other materials that are not part of the Contra Costa kit.

***Note—contents of this kit include many sample documents and templates.*** They may be adapted as necessary to meet local needs. We hope that you will find this kit helpful in your pandemic planning efforts and will put it to good use.



## LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

January 2007

Dear School Official:

This packet of information is designed to provide you with practical tools that will help you and your staff to prepare for an influenza pandemic. Its contents include many sample documents that may be adapted to your local needs.

A pandemic is a global epidemic that could occur if a new influenza virus emerged that was able to spread rapidly from person to person. Currently, there are concerns about the H5N1 “bird flu” virus that has caused human illness and deaths in other parts of the world. At present, there is little human-to-human transmission with this virus, but it is possible it will mutate to a strain that passes easily from one person to another. It is also possible that another novel flu virus will appear with little warning. Three influenza pandemics occurred in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and scientists warn that another is inevitable.

When a pandemic occurs (and experts say it’s not a matter of “if” but “when”), the number of people who get sick will be much larger than during a normal flu season, and their illness will be much more severe. That is because few of us would have any natural immunity to a new virus. Every segment of society would be profoundly affected, including schools. For example: in a pandemic, schools may have to close to limit the spread of illness, or because of excess absenteeism. It is possible that closures could last for a considerable length of time—perhaps as long as 12 weeks.

There are important issues to consider in advance, such as whether your school has policies that discourage employees and students from staying home when they have flu-like symptoms. Is a school nurse available to assess flu-like illness when a student or teacher gets symptoms during the school-day? Can someone with flu-like symptoms be isolated (physically separated) from the rest of the school body? If school closes, what will happen to students who rely on free and reduced-price meals?

We hope your school is already working on pandemic preparedness. If not, we encourage you to call your local health department for advice and guidance. They will be glad to help you get started.



# **SCHOOL PROCESS/PLANNING MATERIALS**



## **SCHOOL ACTION STEPS FOR PANDEMIC FLU**

The following describes important step-by-step actions schools should take before, during and after an influenza pandemic. Pandemic influenza can occur in several cycles or waves so this list may need to be repeated.

### **PRIOR TO OUTBREAK/PREPAREDNESS AND PLANNING PHASE**

Create a pandemic influenza plan. (Use the CDC School Pandemic Flu Planning Checklist in the “Other Resources” section of the kit.) This may be an annex to the existing school emergency plan.

Work with local health officials and emergency preparedness officials. They may ask schools to disseminate information to families. Please see Parent Letter #1 in the Parent section of this kit.

Determine the roles and responsibilities of faculty and staff to prevent the spread of influenza.

Train nurses (if available), faculty, and staff in flu-symptom recognition. (See surveillance section of this kit for more specific guidance.)

Remember that a person who is infected does not show symptoms right away. Children who are getting ill may exhibit different behavior than usual, such as eating less or being irritable.

Ensure that standard surveillance/disease recognition procedures are in place and implemented.

Educate students, faculty and staff on how and why it is important to improve personal hygiene. Use simple non-medical ways to reduce the spread of influenza such as covering coughs and sneezes, washing hands and staying home if you’re sick. (See “Other Resources” section of this kit for informational materials.)

Work with your local health department to determine whether the school should be cleaned differently or more often if a pandemic occurs.

Decide how and when to encourage or require children, faculty, and staff to stay home when they are mildly ill.

Review the health needs of students. Some students may have a greater risk of infections. Encourage those families to talk to their health care provider. Some parents may need to be more cautious in keeping their children out of school.

Consider alternative learning strategies such as collaborative agreements with public television stations or local cable access stations, teleconferencing, lessons on CDs or online for children with Internet access at home.

Educate staff, students and parents about: the differences between annual/seasonal flu, bird flu and pandemic influenza; best hygienic practices to prevent any sort of flu or any flu-like illness; and what could occur in a pandemic. (Use the sample documents provided for parents and media and the fact sheets, checklists and flyers included in the "Other Resources" section of this kit.)

**PANDEMIC INFLUENZA IS IDENTIFIED IN OTHER PARTS OF THE WORLD/COUNTRY BUT IS NOT IN NEW YORK STATE  
(Schools have not yet been advised to close)**

Begin Heightened Surveillance Reporting.

Send out Parent Letter #3 Initial Outbreak, informing parents that schools remain open; include tip sheets and informational resource list.

Work with your local health department to issue a press release (Press release A\*) announcing that schools remain open but parents need to prepare/Use key messages A.\*

Post flu prevention signs throughout school facilities and administrative offices.

Encourage all students, faculty, and staff to wash their hands thoroughly with soap and water before eating. When hand washing is not possible, school should consider providing hand sanitizing rubs that contain at least 60% alcohol. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers can cause skin dryness, irritation or rashes. If used, select a product that contains an emollient or also provide a moisturizing lotion or cream.

If hand sanitizer is made available, children should only use it under adult supervision. They should be trained to use it appropriately. **NOTE: hand sanitizer gel is not suitable for children under six.** Always follow label precautions.



If room ventilation is poor, alcohol may reach levels in the air that are irritating. This is particularly true when large numbers of individuals are sanitizing their hands at once, if individuals use more of a product than is recommended, and/or if the product is accidentally spilled. Hand sanitizers that contain alcohol are flammable. Do not place dispensers in hallways or near an open flame or source of sparks (e.g. static electricity). For further help with planning safe placement of dispensers, consult your BOCES health and safety staff, Facilities Planning Unit in the State Education Department or the Fire Prevention Bureau of the State Office of Fire Prevention and Control.

Take direction from the local health department regarding disinfection efforts, should they be normal cleaning routines or enhanced sanitation efforts. Proper cleaning will significantly reduce pathogens on surfaces. If an additional disinfection step is recommended by health officials, staff should be trained in the proper use of disinfectants.

Make sure any additional cleaning is carried out throughout the building and not targeted to one classroom or site; this will prevent the inadvertent identification of the student with the suspected contagious condition.

### **OUTBREAK WORSENS (School closure is advised)**

Close school(s).

Send out Parent Letter #4 School Closure, announcing closure(s).

Cancel any non-academic events.

### **FOLLOWING THE OUTBREAK (Schools re-open)**

Local health department issues advisory that schools can re-open.

Issue Parent Letter #5.

Continue communicating with local health department.

Return to heightened surveillance reporting.

If students get sick again, start checklist again at Outbreak section.



## **PUBLIC HEALTH INSTRUCTIONS DURING AN INFLUENZA PANDEMIC**

Throughout an influenza pandemic, people may be asked or required to do things to help reduce the spread of the disease in our community.

Here are some examples of what health officials may ask people to do:

### **STAY HOME**

People who have flu-like symptoms should stay home. Children should not go to school if they have symptoms of flu-like illness. Symptoms include:

- Fever over 100 degrees F.
- AND
- Cough OR sore throat

Unlike a cold, with symptoms that come on gradually, influenza hits all at once. Fever and severe body aches are common. Staying home if you think you have the flu will be absolutely necessary during a pandemic to limit the spread of the disease.

### **AVOID LARGE GROUPS**

During a pandemic, people—even those who are well—should stay away from public gathering places and large groups. During a pandemic public events could be cancelled because the flu virus will spread rapidly anywhere people are close together.

### **ISOLATION AND QUARANTINE**

Isolation and Quarantine are public health actions used to contain the spread of a contagious disease. Although these actions come under the purview of public health officials, a description of Isolation and Quarantine is provided for informational purposes. During a pandemic, it will be important that students, faculty and staff follow any Isolation and/or Quarantine instructions that are issued by public health officials.

ISOLATION is for people who are already ill. When someone is isolated, they are separated from people who are healthy. Having the sick person isolated (separated from others) can help to slow or stop the spread of disease.

People who are isolated can be cared for in their homes, in hospitals, or other healthcare facilities. Isolation is usually voluntary, but local, state and federal government has the power to require the isolation of sick people to protect the public.

During a pandemic if students, faculty or staff exhibit flu-like symptoms, they will need to be isolated from others at school. Inform the local health department immediately if this happens and follow their instructions.

QUARANTINE is for people who have been exposed to the disease but are not sick. Even though the person is not sick at the moment, they were exposed to the disease and may still become infectious and then spread the disease to others. Quarantine can help to slow or stop this from happening. When someone is placed in quarantine, they are separated from others until it can be determined whether they were infected (for instance, they develop symptoms—in which case they will be isolated—or the incubation period passes and the individual does not become ill).

Local Health Departments generally have the power to enforce quarantines within their jurisdictions. Quarantines will be most effective during the very early stages of a pandemic before the virus begins to circulate broadly.



# **INFLUENZA SURVEILLANCE MATERIALS**



## **INFLUENZA-LIKE ILLNESS (ILI) CASE DEFINITION**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention defines an influenza-like illness as having the following symptoms:

Fever of more than 100 degrees Fahrenheit  
**and** cough and/or sore throat (in the absence of a known cause).

Other symptoms may include nasal congestion, muscle aches and fatigue.

A student with flu-like symptoms must be sent to the office for screening (symptom check and/or taking temperature). If student meets the case definition as described above, he/she must be excluded from school until symptom free.



## **OTHER SURVEILLANCE MATERIALS ARE UNDER DEVELOPMENT**

**These will be provided separately as soon as they are available**



## **INFORMATION FOR PARENTS**



## **SAMPLE PARENT LETTER #1**

### **“Prevention Letter”**

**Use this letter to help prepare parents for pandemic flu – before there are human pandemic flu or bird flu cases in the U.S.**

Dear Parents,

This letter will help your family prepare for an influenza pandemic that could make many people sick.

A pandemic is a global disease epidemic. Pandemics happen when a new virus emerges that is able to spread rapidly from person to person and make a lot of people sick. Currently, there are concerns about the highly pathogenic H5N1 “bird flu” virus that has caused human illness and deaths in other parts of the world. Right now, this virus doesn’t spread easily from one person to another, but it is possible it could mutate (change) and be able to do that. It is also possible that another new flu virus will turn up. Three influenza pandemics occurred in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, and experts worry that another could happen at any time.

Public health officials want people to protect themselves against pandemic flu now by learning healthy habits that help to reduce the spread of germs.

- People who are sick should stay home from work or school and avoid other people until they are better.
- Teach your children to wash their hands often. Washing with soap and hot water for at least 20 seconds is ideal. That’s about as long as it takes to sing the “Happy Birthday” song twice.
- Teach your children the proper use of hand sanitizer. Gels, rubs and hand wipes all work well, as long as they contain at least 60% alcohol. Hand wipes must be disposed of properly. Always read and follow label instructions when using hand sanitizer.
- Teach your children to keep their hands away from their face and avoid touching their mouth, nose or eyes.



- Teach your children to cover coughs and sneezes with tissues or by coughing into the inside of their elbow. Cough or sneeze into your sleeve—not your hands!

Enclosed with this letter is a checklist to help families get ready for an influenza pandemic. This information can also help your family get ready for any kind of emergency.

**Please stay informed and be prepared. You may get information online at [www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov), [www.nyhealth.gov](http://www.nyhealth.gov), [LOCAL WEBSITE], or call [LOCAL TELEPHONE CONTACT INFORMATION]. Thank you for your cooperation to keep our children and our schools healthy.**



## **SAMPLE PARENT LETTER #2**

### **“First Bird Case”**

**Even though the confirmation of a bird infected with avian/bird flu in the United States does not signal a pandemic, there will be confusion and concern when this happens. Use this letter to help parents understand the significance of what has happened.**

Dear Parents,

Birds infected with the highly pathogenic H5N1 avian flu virus have been identified in the United States. You may have heard that this “Bird Flu” virus has caused illness and death in many parts of the world. It is important to note that most people who got sick had close contact with infected birds. Therefore, even though this bird flu is now in the United States, it does NOT mean that a lot of people here will get sick. At this time, there are no known human cases of bird flu in the United States. There are simple things we can do to protect ourselves.

To reduce the risk of bird flu, please make sure all your family members take these common sense precautions:

- Do not touch sick or dead birds.
- If you MUST pick up a sick or dead bird (for example, if one is on your doorstep) never use your bare hands. Pick up the bird with a shovel, or wear gloves. Wash your hands immediately after removing your gloves.
- Regularly clean bird feeders and birdbaths while wearing gloves.
- Wash your hands thoroughly after coming in contact with bird droppings.
- If you pick up droppings, use a shovel, “pooper scooper,” or gloves. Never use your bare hands.
- Try to avoid contact with dirt or grass that is soiled with bird droppings.
- Teach children to always wash their hands after playing outside.

- After being outside where droppings are present, take off shoes or other footwear before entering the home.

You may also have heard that some scientists are worried that the H5N1 bird flu virus might someday cause an influenza pandemic in humans (a worldwide epidemic). To cause a pandemic, the virus would have to mutate so that it could spread easily from one person to another. Bird flu does not do that right now. Bird flu is hard for people to catch. Still, it makes sense to be prepared!

Enclosed with this letter is a checklist to help families get ready for an influenza pandemic or any kind of health emergency. Be aware. Be prepared. Stay informed!

**You can get more information from the New York State Department of Health: [www.nyhealth.gov](http://www.nyhealth.gov)**

**The federal government website with information on planning for individuals and families: [www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov)**

**American Red Cross:**  
[www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org)



## **SAMPLE LETTER TO PARENTS #3**

### **Initial Pandemic Flu Situation**

**Use this letter to let parents know schools are still open, despite the presence of pandemic influenza in other parts of the world/country**

Dear Parents,

This letter is to inform you that [NAME] county has entered a heightened surveillance stage resulting from the presence of a novel (new) influenza virus that is making people sick in other parts of the [WORLD/COUNTRY]. Due to the global nature of this epidemic, it is being called a “pandemic.” We realize that many people are very worried and we hope this letter will help address your concerns.

**At this time, the county health department has advised us that students can continue to come to school, as long as they are not sick or think they have symptoms of influenza-like illness. Symptoms include: fever (over 100 degrees F.) AND cough OR sore throat; runny nose; muscle pain and fatigue.** If you suspect your child is getting the flu, it is essential that he/she does not attend school or go anywhere else—such as childcare, the mall, or sporting events—where other people would be exposed to flu germs. **It is also important to teach your children how to reduce their risk of getting the flu and protect others from infection.**

- Teach your children to wash their hands often. Washing with soap and hot water for at least 20 seconds is ideal (that’s about as long as it takes to sing the “Happy Birthday” song twice).
- Teach your children the proper use of hand sanitizer. Gels, rubs and hand wipes all work well, as long as they contain at least 60% alcohol. Hand wipes must be disposed of properly. Always read and follow label instructions when using hand sanitizer.
- Teach your children to keep their hands away from their face and avoid touching their mouth, nose or eyes.

- Teach your children to cover coughs and sneezes with tissues or by coughing into the inside of their elbow. Cough or sneeze into your sleeve—not your hands!
- Help your children to learn these healthy habits by setting a good example and always doing them yourself.

If we all practice good hygiene, health officials believe we can limit the spread of flu in our school at this time. Because the flu virus can live for a number of hours on surfaces such as desks and doorknobs, as a safeguard, custodial staff will clean classrooms and common areas regularly. We are consulting with local health officials regarding best cleaning practices for infection control.

We will inform parents immediately if the situation changes and it becomes necessary to close schools. If closures are advised, they could last for as long as 12 weeks. Parents should anticipate that possibility and plan for how children could be cared for in their own homes. If schools are closed, please do not make arrangements—such as sending children to a friend’s home—that will put them in close contact with other children.

**Please stay informed by paying attention to media reports. You may also get information at [www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov), [www.nyhealth.gov](http://www.nyhealth.gov), [LOCAL WEBSITE], or [LOCAL TELEPHONE CONTACT INFORMATION]. Thank you for your cooperation to keep our children and our schools healthy.**



## **SAMPLE LETER TO PARENTS #4 “School Closure”**

**Use this letter to inform parents schools are closed**

Dear Parents,

Health officials have advised that all schools in [NAME] County should close immediately until further notice and children should stay home. Schools may be closed for as long as 12 weeks to reduce contact among children and stop the spread of the pandemic influenza virus that is having such a serious health impact.

We know this many people are sick and others are very worried. We greatly appreciate your cooperation in this difficult time for our community.

Because the virus is easily spread from person-to-person, it is not safe for large groups of people to gather. During this time, both children and adults should stay away from other people and groups as much as possible. They should not gather in crowded locations such as shopping malls, movie theaters or community centers.

We know that it may be hard to get a doctor’s appointment, go to a clinic or even be seen in a hospital emergency room. The health department has provided the following advice for helping those who are sick with the flu:

- Have them drink a lot of liquid (juice, water)
- Keep the sick person as comfortable as possible. Rest is important.
- For fever, sore throat or muscle aches, use over-the-counter pain relievers. Choose either name brands or store brands—either choice is fine. CAUTION: Check with a health care provider if you think there may be a medical reason, such as an allergy, not to give these products to the sick person. NEVER give aspirin to someone under 20 years of age because of the possibility of a dangerous side effect called Reye’s syndrome.

- Keep tissues and a trash bag within reach of the sick person.
- Be sure everyone in your home washes their hands frequently with soap and water. If you go out in public, carry hand sanitizer and use it often. Rubs, gels or wipes are all effective, as long as they contain at least 60% alcohol. Always dispose of hand wipes properly. Use hand sanitizer according to label instructions.
- Keep your hands away from your face. The flu virus can live a long time on surfaces such as hand rails and door knobs and easily be transferred from your hands to your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Keep the people who are sick with the flu away from the people who are not sick.

We will contact you as soon as we have information about when school will reopen. Please stay informed by paying attention to media reports. You may also get information at [www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov), [www.nyhealth.gov](http://www.nyhealth.gov), [LOCAL WEBSITE], or [LOCAL TELEPHONE CONTACT INFORMATION]. Thank you for your cooperation to help our children and our community.



## **SAMPLE LETTER TO PARENTS #5 “School Re-Opens”**

**Use this letter to inform parents schools are re-opened.**

Dear Parents,

Health officials have declared the influenza pandemic is under control. Our school will open again on [DATE]. At this time, students may safely return to class if they have no flu-like symptoms.

Because the flu spreads easily from person-to-person, please keep children who have flu-like symptoms at home. Symptoms include: fever of more than 100 degrees F. **and** cough or sore throat. Don't send sick children to school—they will be excluded from class and sent home.

Even though school is re-opening, there are still some people who are sick. Health officials say that influenza pandemics sometimes happen in waves. This means more people could become sick in the weeks or months ahead. If more people do get sick, schools may need to close again. We will continue to give you any important information.

We are looking forward to seeing your children again.





## Tips for Parents on Coping with Pandemic Flu

### Plan for an extended stay at home during the flu pandemic:

- Ask your employer if you can work from home during the flu pandemic.
- Plan for a possible reduction or loss of income, if you are unable to work or your place of employment is closed.
- Check with your employer or union about leave policies.
- Plan home learning activities and exercises. Have materials, such as books, on hand.
- Plan recreational activities that your children can do at home.

### Items to have on hand for an extended stay at home:

#### **Examples: Non-perishable foods**

- ~Ready to eat canned meats, fruits, vegetables, soups
- ~Protein or fruit bars
- ~Dry cereal or granola
- ~Peanut butter and jelly
- ~Dried fruit, nuts, trail mix
- ~Crackers
- ~Canned juices
- ~Bottled water
- ~Canned or jarred baby food
- ~Baby formula
- ~Pet food

#### **Health and emergency supplies**

- ~Prescribed medical supplies such as glucose and blood pressure monitoring
- ~Soap and water or alcohol based hand wash
- ~Medicines for fever, such as aspirin, acetaminophen (Tylenol) ibuprofen (Motrin) or naproxen (Naprosyn, Aleve)
- ~Thermometer
- ~Vitamins
- ~Fluids with electrolytes, such as Pedialyte®, Gatorade®
- ~Flashlight with extra batteries
- ~Portable radio with extra batteries
- ~Manual can opener
- ~Garbage bags
- ~Tissues, toilet paper, disposable diapers

**If someone in your home develops flu symptoms (fever, cough, muscle aches):**

- √ Encourage them to drink plenty of fluids.
- √ Keep the ill person as comfortable as possible. Rest is important.
- √ For adults with fever, sore throat and muscle aches, use aspirin, ibuprofen, acetaminophen or naproxen. (Check with your health care provider if you think there is a medical reason, such as an allergy, not to give these products to the sick person.)
- √ Do not use aspirin in children or teenagers; it can cause Reye's syndrome, a life threatening illness.
- √ Sponging with tepid (wrist-temperature) water lowers fever temporarily. Do not sponge with alcohol.
- √ Keep tissues and a trash bag for their disposal within reach of the patient.
- √ All members of the household should wash their hands frequently.
- √ Keep other family members and visitors away from the person who is ill.
- √ Contact a healthcare provider for further advice. If the ill person is having difficulty breathing or getting worse, contact the healthcare provider right away.

For more information, visit [www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov), [www.nyhealth.gov](http://www.nyhealth.gov), [LOCAL WEBSITE], or [LOCAL TELEPHONE CONTACT INFORMATION].



## **TIPS FOR PARENTS: If Schools are Closed**

During a flu pandemic, schools may be closed. Your children may have to stay home for an extended period of time (possibly for up to 12 weeks). You and your children will not be able to go visit public places. Your work may be disrupted due to company closures and you may have to stay home to take care of your children because they should not be exposed to groups of other children.

### ***Internet Resources for Educating Children at Home***

[www.loc.gov/families](http://www.loc.gov/families)

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

[www.education.noaa.gov](http://www.education.noaa.gov)

[www.whitehouse.gov/kids](http://www.whitehouse.gov/kids)

[www.nps.gov/webrangers](http://www.nps.gov/webrangers)



# **INFORMATION FOR MEDIA**



## **SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE “A”**

**Use this type of press release to announce that schools remain open**

For release (DATE)

Contact: (PIO name and number)

### **LOCAL SCHOOLS REMAIN OPEN BUT PARENTS SHOULD PREPARE**

Local schools remain open despite the presence of pandemic flu elsewhere in the [WORLD/COUNTRY] but parents are asked to prepare for possible closures if the virus continues to spread. School and county health officials are working together to monitor the situation and parents will be updated with any important information.

“At this time, the county health department has advised us that students who are not ill can continue to attend school,” [NAME OF SCHOOL OFFICIAL] said. “School will remain open. As a safeguard, custodial staff will clean classrooms and common areas regularly. We are consulting with local health officials regarding best cleaning practices for infection control. However, to keep the flu from spreading to more people, we ask you to keep sick children home. Any children who come to school with flu-like symptoms will be sent home.”

Flu-like symptoms include: fever (over 100 degrees F.) AND cough OR sore throat; runny nose; muscle pain and fatigue. If you suspect your child is getting the flu, it is essential that he/she does not attend school or go anywhere else—such as childcare, the mall, or sporting events—where other people would be exposed to flu germs. Children who are getting ill may exhibit different behavior than usual, such as eating less or being irritable.

If the pandemic flu continues to spread and more students become ill, health officials say they may need to advise that schools be closed for a period of time. They urged parents to begin planning now for childcare in their home.

Health officials say parents can help protect their children and prevent the spread of pandemic flu as they would colds and other flu by taking the following precautions:

- Teach your children to wash hands frequently with soap and water for 20 seconds (about as long as it takes to sing the “Happy Birthday” song twice). Be sure to set a good example by doing this yourself.
- Teach your children the proper use of hand sanitizer. Gels, rubs and hand wipes all work well, as long as they contain at least 60% alcohol. Hand wipes must be disposed of properly. Always read and follow label instructions when using hand sanitizer.
- Teach your children to cover coughs and sneezes with tissues or by coughing into the inside of the elbow. Be sure to set a good example by doing this yourself.
- Teach your children to stay at least three feet from people who are sick. That’s the same distance as a yardstick.
- People who are sick should stay home from work or school and avoid other people until they are better.

Health officials stress that recommendations may change if the local situation worsens. Parents are urged to monitor media reports. For more information on pandemic flu, visit [www.nyhealth.gov](http://www.nyhealth.gov) or [www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov) or [LOCAL WEBSITE INFORMATION].



## **SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE “B”**

**Use this type of press release to announce school closures  
A similar press release will be issued when school reopens**

For immediate release: [DATE]

Contact: [PIO name and number]

### **HEALTH OFFICIALS ADVISE CLOSURE OF SCHOOLS IN [NAME] COUNTY**

State and local health officials have advised the closure of schools to slow, or reduce the spread of disease now that the influenza pandemic has reached our [STATE/COUNTY]. At this time it is not known how long schools will be closed, but it may be for as long as 12 weeks.

Because the influenza virus is easily passed from one person to another through such actions as coughing, sneezing and even talking, colleges, day care centers and preschools have also been advised to close. Health officials caution that it is unsafe for large groups of people to gather in any crowded location and they warn people to stay away from shopping malls, community centers and other places where they may be exposed to the dangerous virus.

“We know this is an anxious time, and we are asking for everyone’s cooperation to help protect our community. We are working closely with health officials to deal with the situation and will keep parents updated with any important information,” said [SCHOOL OFFICIAL].

According to [LOCAL HEALTH OFFICIAL], the purpose of closing schools is to limit contact among children to decrease their risk of getting sick and to limit the spread of infection. For that reason, parents should not make day care arrangements—such as sending the child to a friend’s home—if that will put them in close contact with other children. No one who has flu symptoms should go out in public, unless it is to seek medical care. In that case, they should stay at least three feet away from other people, and if possible, wear a mask.

Symptoms of influenza-like illness include: fever (over 100 degrees F.) AND cough OR sore throat; runny nose; muscle pain and fatigue. If you believe you have influenza and are unable to contact your health care provider right away, be sure to do the following:

- Unless you know of a medical reason not to—such as a medication allergy—use over-the-counter pain relievers to control fever, sore throat and muscle aches. Do not use aspirin in children or teenagers; it can cause Reye’s syndrome, a life-threatening illness.
- Drink plenty of liquids to avoid dehydration.
- Call 9-1-1 immediately if the following symptoms are present: chest pain unrelated to coughing; difficulty breathing; irregular heartbeat; fainting; confusion/disorientation; seizures; numbness or tingling on one side of the body.
- Be sure everyone in your home washes their hands frequently.
- Keep anyone who is sick with the flu away from the people who are not sick.

More information on pandemic influenza is available at [www.nyhealth.gov](http://www.nyhealth.gov) or [www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov) or [LOCAL WEBSITE INFORMATION].





## **SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE “C”**

Use this type of press release to announce when school reopens

For immediate release: [DATE]

Contact: [PIO name and number]

### **HEALTH OFFICIALS ADVISE SCHOOLS MAY REOPEN IN [NAME] COUNTY**

State and local health officials have advised that the influenza pandemic is under control and students may return to class if they have no flu-like symptoms.

“Because the flu spreads easily from person-to-person, please keep children who have flu-like symptoms at home,” [SCHOOL OFFICIAL] said. “Symptoms include: fever of more than 100 degrees F. and cough or sore throat. Don’t send sick children to school—they will be excluded from class and sent home.”

Although school is re-opening, there are some people in the community who are still sick, so it is important to continue to practice healthy habits. Wash hands frequently with soap and water. If you are someplace that does not have a sink, use hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol. Always read and follow label instructions. Keep your hands away from your eyes, nose and mouth. Keep your distance from people who are coughing or sneezing. Try to stay at least three feet away—the length of a yardstick or a little more than arm’s length for most adults.

Health officials say that influenza pandemics sometimes happen in waves. This means more people could become sick in the weeks or months ahead. If more people do get sick, schools may need to close again.

More information on pandemic influenza is available at [www.nyhealth.gov](http://www.nyhealth.gov) or [www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov) or [LOCAL WEBSITE INFORMATION].



## **SAMPLE KEY MESSAGES FOR SCHOOL OFFICIALS “A”**

**Use these messages if pandemic influenza is present in other parts of the world/country**

- At this time, under the guidance of the county health department, we believe students can safely attend classes and schools will remain open.
- As a safeguard, custodial staff will clean classrooms and common areas regularly. We are consulting with local health officials regarding best cleaning practices for infection control.
- It is essential that no student comes to school with flu symptoms.
  - Symptoms of flu-like illness include: fever (over 100 degrees F.) AND cough OR sore throat; runny nose; muscle pain and fatigue.
- If you suspect your child is getting the flu, it is essential that he/she does not attend school or go anywhere else—such as childcare, the mall, or sporting events—where other people would be exposed to flu germs.
- Children who are getting ill may exhibit different behavior than usual, such as eating less or being irritable.
- If pandemic flu continues to spread and more students become ill, health officials may need to close schools for an extended period of time (for example, as long as 12 weeks).
- The purpose of closing schools will be to decrease contact among children in order to decrease their risk of getting sick and to limit the spread of infection. If schools are closed, children should stay at home.
- We urge parents to plan now for the possibility of schools closing. Arrange for child care in other than a group day care setting.
- Parents can help protect their children and reduce the spread of pandemic flu by taking the following precautions:

- Teach your children to wash hands frequently with soap and water for 20 seconds (about as long as it takes to sing the “Happy Birthday” song twice.) Be sure to set a good example by doing this yourself.
- Teach your children the proper use of hand sanitizer. Gels, rubs and hand wipes all work well, as long as they contain at least 60% alcohol. Hand wipes must be disposed of properly. Always read and follow label instructions when using hand sanitizer.
- Teach your children to cover coughs and sneezes with tissues or by coughing into the inside of the elbow.
- Teach your children to dispose of used tissues properly.
- Teach your children to stay away from people who are sick.
- Recommendations may change during the course of a flu pandemic. We will make public announcements through the media.
- You may also get information at [www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov), [www.nyhealth.gov](http://www.nyhealth.gov), [LOCAL WEBSITE], or [LOCAL TELEPHONE CONTACT INFORMATION].



## **SAMPLE KEY MESSAGES FOR SCHOOL OFFICIALS “B”**

**Use these messages if schools are advised to close**

- Health officials have advised that all schools in [NAME] County should close immediately until further notice and children should stay home.
- Schools may be closed for as long as 12 weeks to reduce contact among children and stop the spread of the pandemic influenza virus that is having such a serious health impact.
- We know this is an anxious time, and we are asking for everyone’s cooperation to help protect our community.
- Because the virus is easily spread from person-to-person, it is not safe for large groups of people to gather. During this time, both children and adults should stay away from other people and groups as much as possible. They should not gather in crowded locations such as shopping malls, movie theaters or community centers.
- We know that it may be hard to get a doctor’s appointment, go to a clinic or even be seen in a hospital emergency room. The health department has provided the following advice for helping those who are sick with the flu:
  - Have them drink a lot of liquid (juice, water).
  - Keep the sick person as comfortable as possible. Rest is important.
  - Unless you know of a medical reason not to—such as a medication allergy—use ibuprofen (e.g., Motrin, Advil), naproxen (Naprosyn, Aleve), acetaminophen (Tylenol) or aspirin (if the sick person is not a child or teenager) to treat fever, sore throat or muscle aches. You may choose name brands or store brands of these products—either choice is fine.

- CAUTION: do not give aspirin to someone under 20 years of age because of the possibility of a dangerous side effect called Reye's syndrome.
- Keep tissues and a trash bag within reach of the sick person.
- Be sure everyone in your home washes their hands frequently. If you go out in public, carry alcohol-based hand sanitizer (rubs, gels or wipes are all effective, as long as they contain at least 60% alcohol). Always read and follow label instructions.
- Keep your hands away from your face. The flu virus can live a long time on surfaces such as hand rails and door knobs and easily be transferred from your hands to your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Keep people who are sick with the flu away from those who are not sick.

We will contact you as soon as we have information about when school will reopen. Please stay informed by paying attention to media reports. You may also get information at [www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov), [www.nyhealth.gov](http://www.nyhealth.gov), [LOCAL WEBSITE], or [LOCAL TELEPHONE CONTACT INFORMATION].



## SAMPLE KEY MESSAGES FOR SCHOOL OFFICIALS “C”

Use these messages to announce that schools will re-open

- Health officials have advised us that the influenza pandemic is under control and it is safe to re-open schools.
  - Our school will open again on [DATE].
  - At that time, students may return to class if they have no flu-like symptoms.
- Because the flu spreads easily from person-to-person, please keep children who have flu-like symptoms at home. Symptoms include: fever of more than 100 degrees F. **and** cough or sore throat.
  - Don't send sick children to school—they will be excluded from class and sent home.
  - Even though school is re-opening, there are still some people who are still sick. Health officials say that influenza pandemics sometimes happen in waves.
  - This means more people could become sick in the weeks or months ahead. If more people do get sick, schools may need to close again.
- We will continue to give you any important information.
- Please also stay informed by paying attention to media reports. You may also get information at [www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov), [www.nyhealth.gov](http://www.nyhealth.gov), [LOCAL WEBSITE], or [LOCAL TELEPHONE CONTACT INFORMATION].



## School Action Kit

# **INFORMATION FOR SCHOOL DISTRICT EMPLOYEES**



**This is a sample memo that you can send to the staff members within your agency during the planning phase. This memo outlines current efforts that are underway in preparing for a possible pandemic outbreak.**

**To: All Employees**  
**From:**  
**Date:**  
**Subject: PANDEMIC INFLUENZA**

Almost daily, we hear about the outbreak of highly pathogenic H5N1 avian influenza and how it is spreading to countries around the world. While the avian flu is not yet in the United States, it may arrive here in the near future. This strain of bird flu is not easily transmitted from person-to-person. Birds, however, are extremely susceptible to the virus. Scientists and public health professionals are concerned that the highly pathogenic H5N1 avian flu virus may mutate so that it can easily infect people and spread rapidly from person-to-person. This would cause a worldwide flu outbreak, called a pandemic. Even if this does not happen, a different, brand new flu virus could emerge with little warning. There were three influenza pandemics in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and experts believe we are overdue for another.

While our hope is that a pandemic will not occur, I want you to be aware that our district is taking a proactive approach in addressing pandemic influenza issues for schools. This includes the development of a written Pandemic Influenza Action Plan. We are working closely with local and state health officials to share the most up-to-date information as it becomes available. We are coordinating our efforts with other agencies involved in pandemic influenza planning and we will continue to monitor the situation so that we are able to efficiently respond to any changes. I will provide you with periodic updates.

In the meantime, we encourage you to learn more about pandemic influenza by visiting [www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov) or [www.nyhealth.gov](http://www.nyhealth.gov). Both websites contain valuable information about what each of us can and should be doing to prepare for the possibility of an influenza pandemic.

Should you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.





**This is a sample memo you can send to faculty and staff if pandemic influenza cases are occurring in other parts of the world/country. The memo reinforces risk reduction measures and informs employees of the possibility that the school may have to close if the situation worsens.**

**To: All employees**  
**From:**  
**Date:**  
**Subject: Pandemic influenza cases in other parts of the [WORLD/COUNTRY]**

Health officials have confirmed that cases of pandemic influenza are now occurring in other parts of the [WORLD/COUNTRY]. It is critical that we all work together to reduce the risk to our students and to ourselves.

Students may come down with pandemic influenza-like symptoms while at school. These include fever of more than 100 degrees F., and coughing or sore throat, usually combined with muscle aches. Unlike a cold, flu symptoms usually occur rapidly. If any student exhibits these symptoms, he/she should immediately be sent to the [OFFICE/NURSE'S OFFICE] and be isolated from other students.

If you have flu-like symptoms, we want you to stay home until you no longer have a fever. If symptoms start while you are at work, please report immediately to the [OFFICE/NURSE'S OFFICE] for evaluation. Stay at least three feet away from other people, and cover your mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, or cough or sneeze into the bend of your arm.

Please practice and reinforce good hygiene procedures to minimize the spread of the flu virus:

- Encourage students and your colleagues to wash their hands thoroughly with soap and water before eating, and do so yourself.
- Remind students to avoid touching their eyes, nose or mouth, because this practice can transfer the flu virus from the hands into the body.

- Discourage students from sharing food or utensils. This is especially important because it is possible to spread the flu virus to others before you have symptoms yourself.

If the situation worsens, there is a possibility that schools may be advised to close, perhaps for up to 12 weeks. We will inform you immediately if a decision is made to close schools.

Thank you for your cooperation in a difficult situation.



**This is a sample memo you can send to faculty and staff if health officials advise schools to close.**

**To: All employees**  
**From:**  
**Date:**  
**Subject: School closure**

Health officials have advised that all schools in [NAME] County should close immediately until further notice and children should stay home. Schools may be closed for as long as 12 weeks to reduce contact among children and stop the spread of the pandemic influenza virus that is having such a serious health impact.

While schools are closed **[include specifics about how people will get paid, if such is the case. If no decision has been made, state that school district administrators are working out the details and they will be informed as soon as possible.]** We appreciate your patience and cooperation in this very difficult situation.

Because the virus is easily spread from person-to-person, it is not safe for large groups of people to gather. During this time, both children and adults should stay away from other people and groups as much as possible. They should not gather in crowded locations such as shopping malls, movie theaters or community centers.

We urge you to stay home if you can, but if you must go out in public, continue to practice good hygiene, wash your hands frequently with soap and water, or use a hand sanitizer according to label instructions if you are not near a sink. Keep your hands away from your mouth, nose and eyes. Use a tissue or cough or sneeze into your sleeve—not into your hands. Dispose of used tissues properly. Try to stay at least three feet away from someone who has flu-like symptoms.

We will contact you as soon as we have information about when school will reopen. Please stay informed by paying attention to media reports. You may also get information at [LOCAL TELEPHONE NUMBER] [www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov), [www.nyhealth.gov](http://www.nyhealth.gov), or [LOCAL WEBSITE]. Thank you for your cooperation to help our children and our community.



## School Action Kit

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**



## HELPFUL WEBSITES

**New York State Department of Health Public Health Duty Officer:**

1-866-881-2809

(Use this number nights and weekends for public health emergencies, including communicable disease reports)

**Your Local Health Department:**

(Find the number by visiting [www.nysacho.org](http://www.nysacho.org))

**Other online resources:**

[www.nyhealth.gov](http://www.nyhealth.gov)

[www.security.state.ny.us/preparedness/](http://www.security.state.ny.us/preparedness/)

[www.nysed.gov](http://www.nysed.gov)

[www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov)

[www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov)

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



## **TELEPHONE “HELPLINES”**

**Centers for Disease Control (CDC) Public Information Line –**  
800-CDC-INFO  
888-232-6348 (TTY)

**School District Information Line [if available] -**

**Local Health Department Information Line [if available] -**



## School Action Kit

### **OTHER RESOURCES**

# Additional Resources

## "Pandemic Flu Action Kit for Schools in New York State"

Please use the materials in this packet to supplement your outreach efforts. This packet includes:

### **Fact Sheets:**

"How Does Seasonal Flu Differ from Pandemic Flu?"

*United States Department of Health and Human Services (DHSS)*

"Pandemic Influenza: Characteristics and Challenges"

[www.pandemicflu.com](http://www.pandemicflu.com)

"Influenza (Flu)"

*DHSS, Center for Disease Control and Prevention, CDC*

### **Check Lists:**

"School District (K-12) Pandemic Influenza Planning Checklist"

*DHSS, CDC*

"Pandemic Flu Planning Check List for Individuals and Families"

*CDC*

### **Articles:**

"Home Care for Pandemic Flu"

*American Red Cross*

### **Flyer:**

"Bird Flu and You: Get the Facts"

*New York State Department of Health*

### **Posters:**

"Keep Our School Healthy"

"Keep Your Germs to Yourself"

"Stop the spread of germs that make you and other sick: Cover Your Cough"

*CDC, Minnesota Department of Health (MDH), Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology (APIC)*

"Keep Your Germs to Yourself. Use a tissue or cough and sneeze into your upper arm"

"Keep Your Germs to Yourself. Wash your hands with soap and hot water, or use a waterless hand cleanser"

"Keep Your Germs to Yourself. Stay home and avoid close contact with others"

*New York State Department of Health*

"Stopping the Flu is Up to You!"





## HOW DOES SEASONAL FLU DIFFER FROM PANDEMIC FLU?

November 1, 2005

### SEASONAL FLU

Outbreaks follow predictable seasonal patterns; occurs annually, usually in winter, in temperate climates

Usually some immunity built up from previous exposure

Healthy adults usually not at risk for serious complications (the very young, the elderly and those with certain underlying health conditions at increased risk for serious complications)

Health systems can usually meet public and patient needs

Vaccine developed based on known virus strains and available for annual flu season

Adequate supplies of antivirals are usually available

Average U.S. deaths approximately 36,000/yr

Symptoms: fever, cough, runny nose, muscle pain. Deaths often caused by complications, such as pneumonia.

Generally causes modest impact on society (e.g., some school closing, encouragement of people who are sick to stay home)

Manageable impact on domestic and world economy

### PANDEMIC FLU

Occurs rarely (three times in 20<sup>th</sup> century - last in 1968)

No previous exposure; little or no pre-existing immunity

Healthy people may be at increased risk for serious complications

Health systems may be overwhelmed

Vaccine probably would not be available in the early stages of a pandemic

Effective antivirals may be in limited supply

Number of deaths could be quite high (e.g., U.S. 1918 death toll approximately 500,000)

Symptoms may be more severe and complications more frequent

May cause major impact on society (e.g. widespread restrictions on travel, closings of schools and businesses, cancellation of large public gatherings)

Potential for severe impact on domestic and world economy

For additional information visit: [www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov)

# Pandemic Influenza:

## CHARACTERISTICS & CHALLENGES

A pandemic is a global disease outbreak. An influenza pandemic occurs when a new influenza virus emerges for which there is little or no immunity in the human population, begins to cause serious illness and then spreads easily person-to-person worldwide.

### Historically, the 20th century saw three pandemics of influenza:

- 1918 influenza pandemic caused at least 500,000 U.S. deaths and up to 50 million deaths worldwide
- 1957 influenza pandemic caused at least 70,000 U.S. deaths and 1-2 million deaths worldwide
- 1968 influenza pandemic caused about 34,000 U.S. deaths and 700,000 deaths worldwide

### Characteristics and Challenges in a Pandemic:

#### 1. There Will Be Rapid Worldwide Spread

- When a pandemic influenza virus emerges, its global spread is considered inevitable.
- Preparedness activities should assume that the entire world population would be susceptible.
- Countries might, through measures such as border closures and travel restrictions, delay arrival of the virus, but cannot stop it.

#### 2. Health Care Systems Will Be Overloaded

- Most people have little or no immunity to a pandemic virus. Infection and illness rates soar. A substantial percentage of the world's population will require some form of medical care.
- Nations unlikely to have the staff, facilities, equipment and hospital beds needed to cope with large numbers of people who suddenly fall ill.
- Death rates are high, largely determined by four factors: the number of people who become infected, the virulence of the virus, the underlying characteristics and vulnerability of affected populations and the effectiveness of preventive measures.
- Past pandemics have spread globally in two and sometimes three waves.

#### 3. Medical Supplies Will Be Inadequate

- The need for vaccine is likely to outstrip supply.
- The need for antiviral drugs is also likely to be inadequate early in a pandemic.
- A pandemic can create a shortage of hospital beds, ventilators and other supplies. Surge capacity at non-traditional sites such as schools may be created to cope with demand
- Difficult decisions will need to be made regarding who gets antiviral drugs and vaccines.

#### 4. There Will Be Economic and Social Disruption

- Travel bans, closings of schools and businesses and cancellations of events could have major impact on communities and citizens.
- Care for sick family members and fear of exposure can result in significant worker absenteeism.



## FACT SHEET

### Stopping Germs at Home, Work and School

#### How Germs Spread

The main way that illnesses like colds and flu are spread is from person to person in respiratory droplets of coughs and sneezes. This is called "droplet spread."

This can happen when droplets from a cough or sneeze of an infected person move through the air and are deposited on the mouth or nose of people nearby. Sometimes germs also can be spread when a person touches respiratory droplets from another person on a surface like a desk and then touches his or her own eyes, mouth or nose before washing their hands. We know that some viruses and bacteria can live 2 hours or longer on surfaces like cafeteria tables, doorknobs, and desks.

#### How to Stop the Spread of Germs

In a nutshell: take care to

- Cover your mouth and nose
- Clean your hands often
- Remind your children to practice healthy habits, too

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

Cough or sneeze into a tissue and then throw it away. Cover your cough or sneeze if you do not have a tissue. Then, clean your hands, and do so every time you cough or sneeze.

#### *The "Happy Birthday" song helps keep your hands clean?*

Not exactly. Yet we recommend that when you wash your hands -- with soap and warm water -- that you wash for 15 to 20 seconds. That's about the same time it takes to sing the "Happy Birthday" song twice!

#### *Alcohol-based hand wipes and gel sanitizers work too*

When soap and water are not available, alcohol-based disposable hand wipes or gel sanitizers may be used. You can find them in most supermarkets and drugstores. If using gel, rub your hands until the gel is dry. The gel doesn't need water to work; the alcohol in it kills the germs on your hands.\*

\* Source: FDA/CFSAN Food Safety A to Z Reference Guide, September 2001: [Handwashing](#).

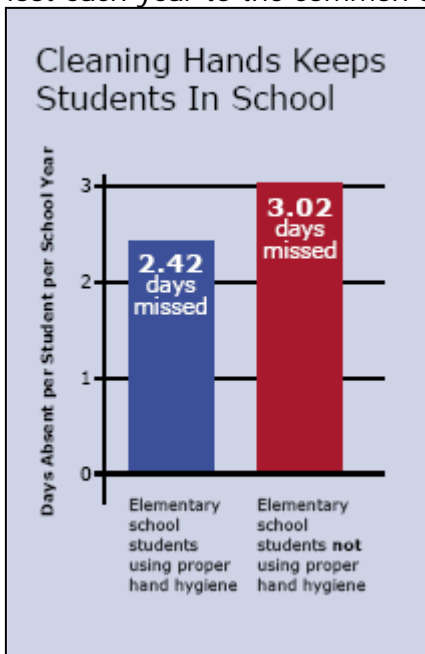
#### Germs and Children

Remind children to practice healthy habits too, because germs spread, especially at school.

## Stopping Germs at Home, Work and School

(continued from previous page)

The flu has caused high rates of absenteeism among students and staff in our country's 119,000 schools. Influenza is not the only respiratory infection of concern in schools -- nearly 22 million school days are lost each year to the common cold alone. However, when children practice healthy habits, they miss fewer days of school.



School administrators, teachers and staff: See [Preventing the Spread of Influenza \(the Flu\) in Schools](#) for CDC interim guidance.

### More Facts, Figures, and How-Tos

CDC and its partner agencies and organizations offer a great deal of information about handwashing and other things you can do to stop the germs that cause flu, the common cold, and other illnesses. See [Other Resources](#) and [Posters](#) on this [Stop the Spread of Germs](#) site for a select listing of Web sites, materials, and contact information.

Source: Am J Infect Control 2000;28: 340-6.

### Stop the Spread of Germs in Schools

#### Fast Facts

- Approximately 1/5 of the U.S. population attends or works in schools. (U.S. Dept of Ed, 1999).
- Some viruses and bacteria can live from 20 minutes up to 2 hours or more on surfaces like cafeteria tables, doorknobs, and desks. (Ansari, 1988; Scott and Bloomfield, 1989)
- Nearly 22 million school days are lost annually due to the common cold alone. (CDC, 1996)
- Addressing the spread of germs in schools is essential to the health of our youth, our schools, and our nation.
- Students need to get plenty of sleep and physical activity, drink water, and eat good food to help them stay healthy in the winter and all year.

For more information, visit [www.cdc.gov/flu](http://www.cdc.gov/flu), or call the CDC Flu Information Line at (800) CDC-INFO.

February 1, 2004

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# SCHOOL DISTRICT (K-12) PANDEMIC INFLUENZA PLANNING CHECKLIST



Local educational agencies (LEAs) play an integral role in protecting the health and safety of their district’s staff, students and their families. The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have developed the following checklist to assist LEAs in developing and/or improving plans to prepare for and respond to an influenza pandemic.

Building a strong relationship with the local health department is critical for developing a meaningful plan. The key planning activities in this checklist build upon existing contingency plans recommended for school districts by the U.S. Department of Education (Practical Information on Crisis Planning: A Guide For Schools and Communities <http://www.ed.gov/admins/lead/safety/emergencyplan/crisisplanning.pdf>).

Further information on pandemic influenza can be found at [www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov).

## 1. Planning and Coordination:

Completed	In Progress	Not Started	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Identify the authority responsible for declaring a public health emergency at the state and local levels and for officially activating the district’s pandemic influenza response plan.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Identify for all stakeholders the legal authorities responsible for executing the community operational plan, especially those authorities responsible for case identification, isolation, quarantine, movement restriction, healthcare services, emergency care, and mutual aid.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	As part of the district’s crisis management plan, address pandemic influenza preparedness, involving all relevant stakeholders in the district (e.g., lead emergency response agency, district administrators, local public health representatives, school health and mental health professionals, teachers, food services director, and parent representatives). This committee is accountable for articulating strategic priorities and overseeing the development of the district’s operational pandemic plan.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Work with local and/or state health departments and other community partners to establish organizational structures, such as the Incident Command System, to manage the execution of the district’s pandemic flu plan. An Incident Command System, or ICS, is a standardized organization structure that establishes a line of authority and common terminology and procedures to be followed in response to an incident. Ensure compatibility between the district’s established ICS and the local/state health department’s and state education department’s ICS.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Delineate accountability and responsibility as well as resources for key stakeholders engaged in planning and executing specific components of the operational plan. Assure that the plan includes timelines, deliverables, and performance measures.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Work with your local and/or state health department and state education agencies to coordinate with their pandemic plans. Assure that pandemic planning is coordinated with the community’s pandemic plan as well as the state department of education’s plan.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Test the linkages between the district’s Incident Command System and the local/state health department’s and state education department’s Incident Command System.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Contribute to the local health department’s operational plan for surge capacity of healthcare and other services to meet the needs of the community (e.g., schools designated as contingency hospitals, schools feeding vulnerable populations, community utilizing LEA’s healthcare and mental health staff). In an affected community, at least two pandemic disease waves (about 6-8 weeks each) are likely over several months.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Incorporate into the pandemic influenza plan the requirements of students with special needs (e.g., low income students who rely on the school food service for daily meals), those in special facilities (e.g., juvenile justice facilities) as well as those who do not speak English as their first language.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Participate in exercises of the community’s pandemic plan.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Work with the local health department to address provision of psychosocial support services for the staff, students and their families during and after a pandemic.

### 1. Planning and Coordination (cont.):

Completed	In Progress	Not Started	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Consider developing in concert with the local health department a surveillance system that would alert the local health department to a substantial increase in absenteeism among students.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Implement an exercise/drill to test your pandemic plan and revise it periodically.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Share what you have learned from developing your preparedness and response plan with other LEAs as well as private schools within the community to improve community response efforts.

### 2. Continuity of Student Learning and Core Operations:

Completed	In Progress	Not Started	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Develop scenarios describing the potential impact of a pandemic on student learning (e.g., student and staff absences), school closings, and extracurricular activities based on having various levels of illness among students and staff.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Develop alternative procedures to assure continuity of instruction (e.g., web-based distance instruction, telephone trees, mailed lessons and assignments, instruction via local radio or television stations) in the event of district school closures.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Develop a continuity of operations plan for essential central office functions including payroll and ongoing communication with students and parents.

### 3. Infection Control Policies and Procedures:

Completed	In Progress	Not Started	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Work with the local health department to implement effective infection prevention policies and procedures that help limit the spread of influenza at schools in the district (e.g. promotion of hand hygiene, cough/sneeze etiquette). Make good hygiene a habit now in order to help protect children from many infectious diseases such as flu.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Provide sufficient and accessible infection prevention supplies (e.g., soap, alcohol-based/waterless hand hygiene products, tissues and receptacles for their disposal).
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Establish policies and procedures for students and staff sick leave absences unique to a pandemic influenza (e.g., non-punitive, liberal leave).
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Establish sick leave policies for staff and students suspected to be ill or who become ill at school. Staff and students with known or suspected pandemic influenza should not remain at school and should return only after their symptoms resolve and they are physically ready to return to school.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Establish policies for transporting ill students.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Assure that the LEA pandemic plan for school-based health facilities conforms to those recommended for health care settings (Refer to <a href="http://www.hhs.gov/pandemicflu/plan">www.hhs.gov/pandemicflu/plan</a> ).

### 4. Communications Planning:

Completed	In Progress	Not Started	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Assess readiness to meet communication needs in preparation for an influenza pandemic, including regular review, testing, and updating of communication plans.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Develop a dissemination plan for communication with staff, students, and families, including lead spokespersons and links to other communication networks.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Ensure language, culture and reading level appropriateness in communications by including community leaders representing different language and/or ethnic groups on the planning committee, asking for their participation both in document planning and the dissemination of public health messages within their communities.

#### 4. Communications Planning (cont.):

Completed	In Progress	Not Started	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Develop and test platforms (e.g., hotlines, telephone trees, dedicated websites, and local radio or TV stations) for communicating pandemic status and actions to school district staff, students, and families.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Develop and maintain up-to-date communications contacts of key public health and education stakeholders and use the network to provide regular updates as the influenza pandemic unfolds.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Assure the provision of redundant communication systems/channels that allow for the expedited transmission and receipt of information.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Advise district staff, students and families where to find up-to-date and reliable pandemic information from federal, state and local public health sources.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Disseminate information about the LEA's pandemic influenza preparedness and response plan (e.g., continuity of instruction, community containment measures).
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Disseminate information from public health sources covering routine infection control (e.g., hand hygiene, cough/sneeze etiquette), pandemic influenza fundamentals (e.g., signs and symptoms of influenza, modes of transmission) as well as personal and family protection and response strategies (e.g., guidance for the at-home care of ill students and family members).
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Anticipate the potential fear and anxiety of staff, students, and families as a result of rumors and misinformation and plan communications accordingly.





# Pandemic Flu Planning Checklist for Individuals and Families

You can prepare for an influenza pandemic now. You should know both the magnitude of what can happen during a pandemic outbreak and what actions you can take to help lessen the impact of an influenza pandemic on you and your family. This checklist will help you gather the information and resources you may need in case of a flu pandemic.

## ***1. To plan for a pandemic:***

---

- Store a supply of water and food. During a pandemic, if you cannot get to a store, or if stores are out of supplies, it will be important for you to have extra supplies on hand. This can be useful in other types of emergencies, such as power outages and disasters.
- Ask your doctor and insurance company if you can get an extra supply of your regular prescription drugs.
- Have any nonprescription drugs and other health supplies on hand, including pain relievers, stomach remedies, cough and cold medicines, fluids with electrolytes, and vitamins.
- Talk with family members and loved ones about how they would be cared for if they got sick, or what will be needed to care for them in your home.
- Volunteer with local groups to prepare and assist with emergency response.
- Get involved in your community as it works to prepare for an influenza pandemic.

## ***2. To limit the spread of germs and prevent infection:***

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- Teach your children to wash hands frequently with soap and water, and model the correct behavior.
- Teach your children to cover coughs and sneezes with tissues, and be sure to model that behavior.
- Teach your children to stay away from others as much as possible if they are sick. Stay home from work and school if sick.





**3. Items to have on hand for an extended stay at home:**

<b>Examples of food and non-perishables</b>	<b>Examples of medical, health, and emergency supplies</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Ready-to-eat canned meats, fruits, vegetables, and soups</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Protein or fruit bars</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Dry cereal or granola</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Peanut butter or nuts</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Dried fruit</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Crackers</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Canned juices</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Bottled water</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Canned or jarred baby food and formula</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Pet food</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Prescribed medical supplies such as glucose and blood-pressure monitoring equipment</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Soap and water, or alcohol-based hand wash</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Medicines for fever, such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Thermometer</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Anti-diarrheal medication</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Vitamins</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Fluids with electrolytes</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Cleansing agent/soap</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Flashlight</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Batteries</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Portable radio</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Manual can opener</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Garbage bags</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Tissues, toilet paper, disposable diapers</li></ul>



## What is Pandemic Flu?

A “pandemic” is a disease that spreads all over the world and affects a large number of people. If you are caring for a loved one during a pandemic, it’s important to take steps to protect yourself and others. Always follow the most current advice of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and your local health department.

## Prevent the Spread of Pandemic Flu

These healthy habits will help keep you and others from getting and passing on the virus.

- > Clean your hands often with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- > Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze and clean your hands afterward. Put used tissues in a wastebasket.
- > Cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve if you don’t have a tissue.
- > Keep your hands away from your eyes, nose and mouth to prevent germs from entering your body.

Also, a person with signs of the flu should:

- > Stay home from work, school and errands and avoid contact with others.
- > Consider wearing a surgical mask when around others. There may be benefits.

## When a Household Member Is Sick

The flu virus is spread when contaminated droplets exit the mouth and nose of an infected person and the virus comes in contact with others. So, follow these tips to protect yourself and others in your home:

- > Keep everyone’s personal items separate. All household members should avoid sharing computers, pens, papers, clothes, towels, sheets, blankets, food or eating utensils.
- > Disinfect door knobs, switches, handles, toys and other surfaces that are commonly touched around the home or workplace.

### Disinfectant:

1 gallon water  
¼ cup bleach

Mix up a fresh batch every time you use it.

- > It is okay to wash everyone’s dishes and clothes together. Use detergent and very hot water. Wash your hands after handling dirty laundry.
- > Wear disposable gloves when in contact with or cleaning up body fluids.
- > One person should be the caregiver. He or she may benefit by wearing a mask when giving care.

## Practice Hand Hygiene

Caregivers should always wash their hands before providing care. Afterward, wash again and apply alcohol-based hand sanitizer as well. Follow these steps for proper hand hygiene:

1. Wet hands with warm, running water and apply liquid soap.
2. Rub hands vigorously for at least 15 seconds, covering all surfaces and fingers.
3. Scrub nails by rubbing them against the palms of your hands.
4. Rinse your hands with water.
5. Dry your hands thoroughly with a paper towel and use it to turn off the faucet. A shared towel will spread germs.

## Recognize Pandemic Flu Symptoms

Watch for these symptoms:

- > Fever
- > Cough
- > Runny nose
- > Muscle pain

Call your health-care professional at the first sign of the flu. Many symptoms can be treated by the health-care professional over the telephone.

## Care for a Loved One with the Flu

A person recovering from flu should have:

- > Rest and plenty of liquids
- > No alcohol or tobacco
- > Medications to relieve flu symptoms

In some cases, a health-care professional may prescribe antiviral drugs to treat the flu. Antibiotics (like penicillin) don’t cure it.

## Monitor Pandemic Flu Symptoms

Keep a care log. Write down the date, time, fever, symptoms, medicines given and dosage. Make a new entry at least every 4 hours or when the symptoms change. Call your healthcare professional again if your loved one has:

- > A high fever
  - Children and Adults:  
Greater than 105°F (40.5°C)
  - Babies 3- to 24-months-old:  
103°F (39.4°C) or higher.
  - Babies up to 3 months:  
Rectal temperature of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher.
- > Shaking chills
- > Coughing that produces thick mucus
- > Dehydration (feeling of dry mouth or excessive thirst)
- > Worsening of an existing serious medical condition (for example: heart or lung disease, diabetes, HIV, cancer)

If you cannot reach your health-care professional, **call 9-1-1** or local emergency number for any of the signs below:

- > Irritability and/or confusion
- > Difficult breathing or chest pain with each breath
- > Bluish skin
- > Stiff neck
- > Inability to move an arm or leg
- > First-time seizure

## Prevent Dehydration

Dehydration occurs when the body loses too much water and it's not replaced quickly enough. It can be serious. Begin giving soothing drinks at the first signs of the flu and follow these tips:

- > In addition to plenty of liquids, give ice and light, easily digested foods, such as soup and broth.

- > If your loved one has diarrhea or vomiting, give fluids that contain electrolytes. These are available at your pharmacy or grocery store. Or you can make your own rehydration electrolyte drink for someone over the age of 12.

### Electrolyte Drink:

1 quart water  
½ tsp. baking soda  
½ tsp. table salt  
3 to 4 tbsp. sugar  
¼ tsp. salt substitute  
Mix well and flavor with lemon juice or sugar-free Kool-Aid®.

- > If drinking liquids makes nausea worse, give one sip at a time until your loved one can drink again.

## Reduce Fever

To help reduce a fever, do the following:

- > Give plenty of fluids.
- > Give fever-reducing medication, such as acetaminophen, aspirin or ibuprofen, as directed on the container's label.  
Do not give aspirin to anyone younger than 20.
- > Keep a record of your loved one's temperature in your care log.
- > To relieve discomfort, give a sponge bath with lukewarm water.

After you have called your doctor or emergency number for a fever, continue to follow the home treatment recommendations above. If there is a delay in getting help, ask a health-care professional if you should start an additional dose of an alternate fever-reducing medication (acetaminophen, ibuprofen or aspirin) between the doses described on the label. Always continue to give plenty of fluids.

## Prepare for a Flu Pandemic

Make a plan now for a flu pandemic. Figure out what you will do if members of your household have to stay home from work or school or stay separated from others for a period of time. Keep extra supplies of food, water, medications and your disaster supply kit on hand.

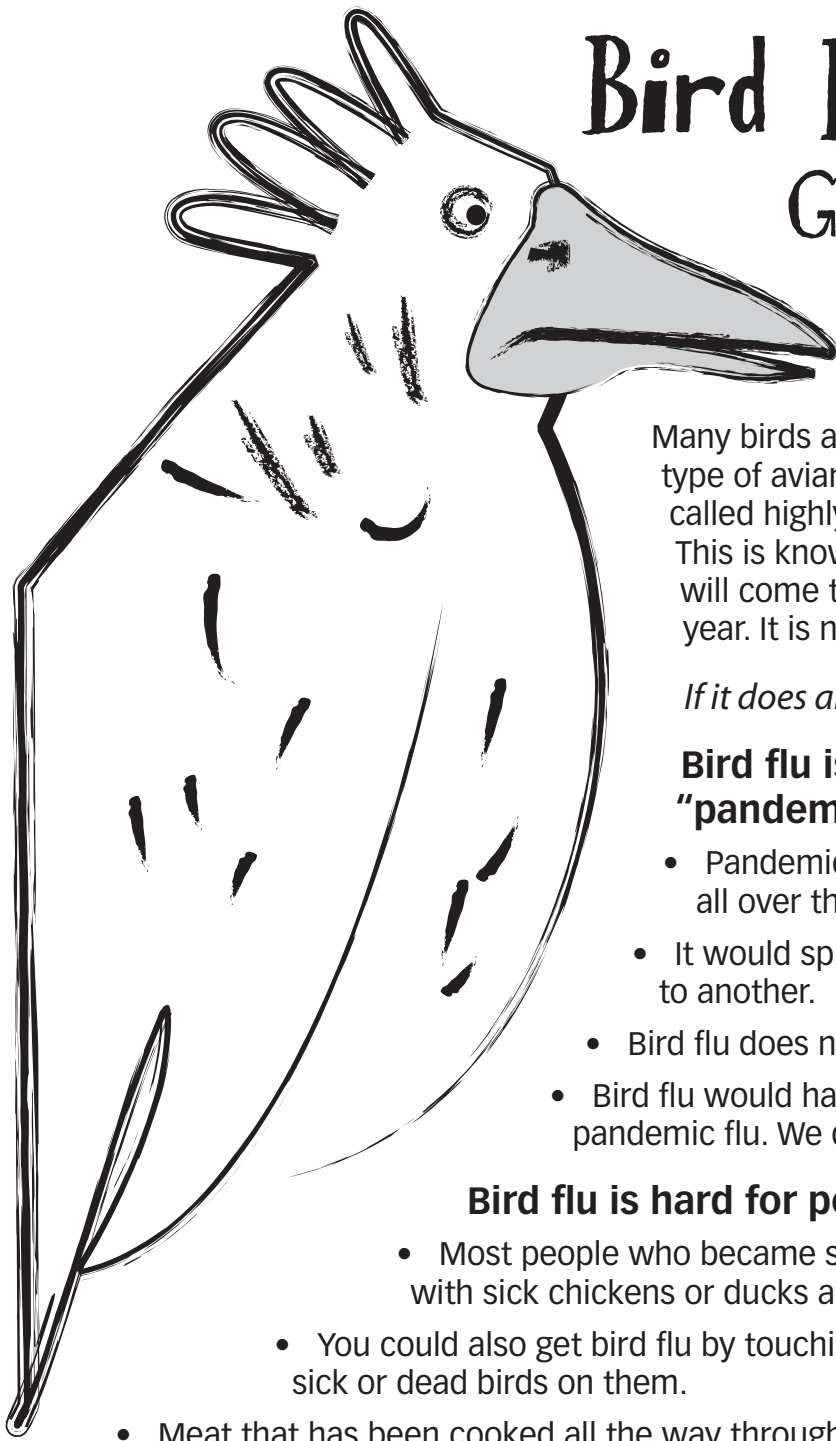
### Pandemic Flu Caregiving Supplies:

- > Thermometer
- > Soap
- > Box of disposable gloves
- > Acetaminophen
- > Ibuprophen
- > Bleach
- > Alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- > Paper towels
- > Tissues
- > Surgical masks  
(one for each person)
- > Sugar, baking soda, salt,  
salt substitute

**For more information, contact your local American Red Cross chapter, visit [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org) or call 1-800-RED-CROSS.**

Many of the recommendations in this brochure are from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. This information is not intended as a substitute for professional medical care or current public health advice. Seek advice from your health-care provider, the CDC and your local health department. Visit [www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov).

As with all medications and treatments, there are side effects and potential complications. Seek professional advice from your health-care professional to make sure any medication or vaccination is appropriate to your health.



# Bird Flu and You

## Get the Facts!

Many birds around the world are getting sick from a type of avian influenza that causes many bird deaths, called highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) H5N1. This is known as "bird flu." Experts think HPAI H5N1 will come to the United States, maybe even this year. It is not here now.

*If it does arrive here, you should know:*

### **Bird flu is not the same thing as "pandemic flu."**

- Pandemic flu would make lots of people sick all over the world.
- It would spread easily from one person to another.
- Bird flu does not do that.
- Bird flu would have to change form to become pandemic flu. We don't know if this will ever happen.

### **Bird flu is hard for people to catch.**

- Most people who became sick with bird flu came into contact with sick chickens or ducks and touched them with bare hands.
- You could also get bird flu by touching things that had droppings from sick or dead birds on them.
- Meat that has been cooked all the way through cannot give you bird flu.

### **Even though bird flu isn't here right now, you should never touch wild birds with your BARE HANDS.**

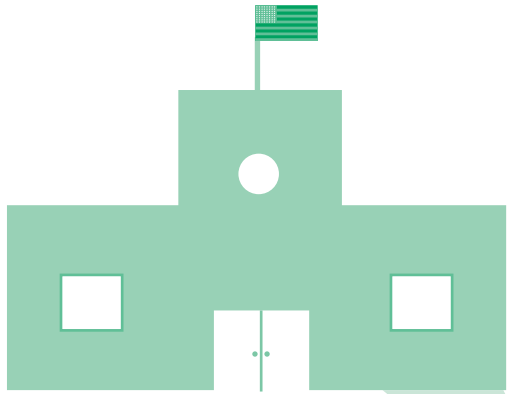
- Birds can carry many kinds of germs that can make us sick.
- A bird could look fine and still be sick.
- If you **MUST** handle a sick or dead bird, wear gloves and wash your hands afterwards.

To learn more about bird flu, visit  
[www.nyhealth.gov](http://www.nyhealth.gov)



**H5N1** Avian Influenza

# Keep our School Healthy



**Teach kids not to  
cough on others**



**Teach kids to wash hands  
often, with soap**



**Teach kids to  
cover their coughs**

# Keep your

# GERMS to Yourself!



**Don't spread germs**



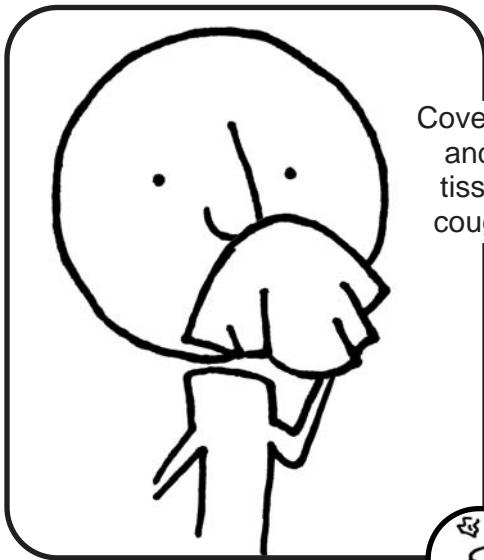
**Cover your cough**



**Wash your hands often**

Stop the spread of germs that make you and others sick!

# Cover your Cough

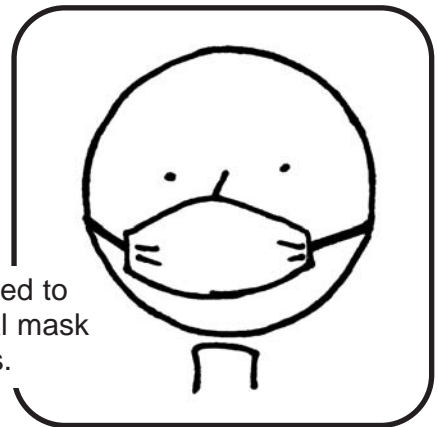


Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze

or cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve, not your hands.



Put your used tissue in the waste basket.



You may be asked to put on a surgical mask to protect others.

# Clean your Hands

after coughing or sneezing.



Wash with soap and water

or clean with alcohol-based hand cleaner.



Minnesota Department of Health  
717 SE Delaware Street  
Minneapolis, MN 55414  
612-676-5414 or 1-877-676-5414  
[www.health.state.mn.us](http://www.health.state.mn.us)



Minnesota  
Antibiotic  
Resistance  
Collaborative



# KEEP YOUR **GERMS** TO **YOURSELF**

Use a tissue or  
cough and sneeze  
into your upper arm.

**We'll all feel better!**



[www.nyhealth.gov](http://www.nyhealth.gov)  
[www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov)





# KEEP YOUR **GERMS** TO **YOURSELF**

Wash your hands with soap  
and hot water, or use a  
waterless hand cleanser after:

- Blowing your nose or coughing
- Using the bathroom
- Being near someone who is ill.

**We'll all feel better!**

[www.nyhealth.gov](http://www.nyhealth.gov)  
[www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov)

Keep your germs to yourself.

# STAY HOME

and avoid close contact with others.

Think you have the flu?  
Think you should try to go  
to work or school, anyway?  
**THINK AGAIN!**

A stylized illustration of a person's head and shoulders in shades of green and white. The person is shown coughing into their right elbow. The background is a gradient of blue and green. A blue circle with a line extending upwards is positioned above the person's head.

[www.nyhealth.gov](http://www.nyhealth.gov)  
[www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov)

# Stopping the Flu is up to you!

The flu is spread from person-to-person when someone who has the flu sneezes, coughs or even talks. The flu virus is put into the air and may be inhaled by anyone close by. Occasionally a person may become infected by touching something with the virus on it and then touching their mouth or nose.



## To protect yourself and your family from the flu:

**Wash** your hands often with soap and warm water.

**Use tissue** when you cough, sneeze or spit, and dispose of the tissue in a covered trash bin.

**Keep hands away** from your face.

**Clean** shared space more often such as phone receivers, keyboards, steering wheels and office equipment.

**Do not share personal items** such as forks, spoons, toothbrushes and towels.

**Avoid** crowds or people who are ill.