

PANDEMICS

An influenza **pandemic** is a *worldwide* outbreak of influenza, *usually* caused by a strain that has *never* circulated, or hasn't circulated for *a long time*.

Historically:

1. Pandemics spread around the world in six months or less.
2. Three pandemics occurred during the 20th century. The last pandemic was the Hong Kong Flu of 1968-69. The Asian Flu struck in 1957-58, while the Spanish Flu - which was the worst - hit in 1918.
3. A "second wave" usually strikes 3-to-12 months following the initial outbreak.
4. Most new strains of influenza begin in animals before spreading on to humans. The virus becomes a pandemic when it mutates and begins to spread successfully from person to person.
5. Each year around 36,000 people in the United States die from the flu or flu-related illness.

The Ross County Health District is planning for a number of scenarios involving a possible pandemic. We will work to keep our citizens informed about our activities and educated on the topic of pandemic influenza.

Also available in the personal and family preparedness series are:

Booklet:

A Guide to Preparedness

Pamphlet:

A Personal and Family Preparedness Plan

Brochures:

Preparing for a Winter Storm

Preparing for a Fire

Preparing for a Flood

Preparing for a Thunder Storm, Lightning or Tornado

Preparing a First Aid and Supply Kit

Influenza and You

Bird Flu: What You Should Know

Preparing for an Influenza Pandemic

Pandemic Planning for Businesses

Preparing for Summer's Bugs and Insects

This brochure is a publication of the
Ross County Health District's
COMMUNITY PREPAREDNESS

Program staff

475 Western Ave., Suite 5A

Chillicothe, Ohio 45601

740.779.1039

www.rosscountyhealth.com

What You Should Know:

Bird Flu



Courtesy of the

Ross County

**Health
DISTRICT**

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: *What is being done locally to address this?*

A: The health district is planning for a number of scenarios and we are working to coordinate efforts with local hospitals, law enforcement, first responders and government agencies.

Q: *Will there be a pandemic of the bird flu?*

A: No one knows for certain. When the virus can mutate and spread successfully from person to person, a pandemic could break out.

Q: *Will there be a vaccine?*

A: Although a vaccine is being produced, once the virus mutates it may not work.

Q: *When will the virus to get here?*

A: Again, no one knows for sure. It appears to be traveling across Asia and Europe on the migration paths of wild birds.

Q: *How many people will die if there is a pandemic?*

A: No one knows that either. Estimates range from the thousands upwards.

Q: *Can I still eat chicken?*

A: Experts say you can, as long as the chicken is cooked thoroughly.

Q: *Can my cat get it from eating an infected bird?*

A: Apparently that very thing happened in Europe.

Q: *Should I buy masks?*

A: No one knows for certain if masks will work.

WHAT IS THE BIRD FLU?

A lot of terms are being thrown around in the media: Bird flu, Avian flu, and H5N1 are different names for the same virus. In the latter (H5N1), the “H” stands for *hemagglutinin* and the “N” for *neuraminidase*: these are subtypes of proteins found on the surface of the virus (the Spanish flu was H1N1.). The Bird flu (or Avian or H5N1) is a Type A influenza virus. It can affect humans and animals, and pandemics usually arise from a Type A virus (there are also Type B and Type C influenza viruses). It is believed that the virus is spreading from animals to humans by way of human contact with the waste or blood of infected birds. This strain was first isolated in Hong Kong in 1997, when 18 people were infected.

INFLUENZA SYMPTOMS

Whether it’s the Bird flu or seasonal influenza, symptoms are similar. All that changes is their severity:

- Fever
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle aches
- Headache
- Fatigue
- Nausea and/or vomiting
- Severe cases can lead to severe respiratory problems and acute respiratory distress and to pneumonia

PERSONAL PROTECTION

There are a number of things you can do in an effort to avoid influenza, whether it’s a pandemic or the seasonal variety. Influenza is a respiratory infection and the virus is usually spread through droplets released via coughing and sneezing. In some cases it can be spread when someone touches a surface that has the virus on it, then touches their nose or mouth.

- Try to be healthy and fit: A strong, healthy body is much more able to fight off the flu virus. Eat five servings a day of fruits and vegetables and be physically active.
- Try to be stress-free: Stress makes the body much more susceptible to illness.
- Wash your hands thoroughly and regularly.
- Keep your hands away from your face, eyes, nose and mouth.
- When possible, avoid close contact with others.
- Get the seasonal flu vaccine.

Avoid Spreading the Flu

- If you feel ill, stay home from work or school, and avoid other people so you don’t pass your illness on to them.
- When you cough or sneeze, be sure to cover your mouth and your nose. If you don’t have a Kleenex or handkerchief, use the sleeve of your shirt or coat.
- Never share drinking glasses or eating utensils.
- Wash your hands regularly.