

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

*Q: Where does influenza come from?*

A: History shows that the virus has existed for centuries (probably for millennia) in nature. Birds are hosts to numerous types, while humans are also natural carriers.

*Q: How many influenza types are there?*

A: Three: Type A viruses are found in birds and include a wide variety of subtypes. Type B viruses originate in human beings and there aren't as many subtypes. There is also a Type C, which is less severe, causing symptoms similar to a common cold.

*Q: How many subtypes are there?*

A: Lots. Influenza viruses get their scientific name from two proteins found on the surface of the virus: Hemagglutinin and Neuraminidase. There are 16 types of the hemagglutinin protein and 9 of neuraminidase. Thus, theoretically, viruses can range from H1N1 to H16N9, with various subtypes.

*Q: What then is the Bird flu?*

A: The Bird flu is simply a name given to a H5N1 subtype of the virus identified in 1997. It originated in birds - thus the name - and spread to humans.

*Q: OK, what's the Swine flu then?*

A: Swine flu is a virus that probably originated in birds or in humans, spread to swine, was "reasserted" then made its way back into humans. The 2009 version is an H1N1.

*Q: So, which one can cause a pandemic?*

A: Either. A new form of the virus can originate in birds or pigs and begin to spread from person to person.

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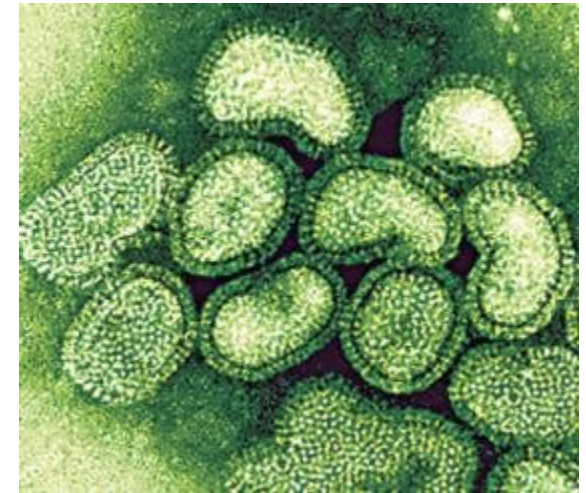
Preparing for Summer's Bugs and Insects

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# Swine...Bird... Flu... and You!



Ross County

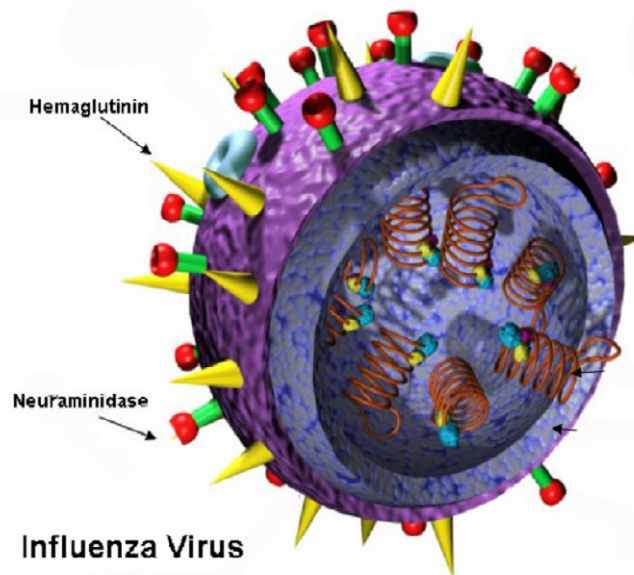


**PANDEMICS** A pandemic is a worldwide outbreak of a communicable disease. There have been three known influenza pandemics. The most recent was the Hong Kong flu in 1968; the Asian flu in 1957; and the deadliest was the Spanish flu in 1918, during which more than 500,000 people died in the United States and more than 40 million died worldwide. Influenza pandemics usually occur when a new strain of the influenza virus “emerges” and humans have no natural protection from it, as we do most seasonal flu strains. The outbreak usually occurs in three concurrent “waves,” often one in the spring, another in the fall and a final wave in the late winter or early spring. These strains can often linger for a number of years. Pandemic influenza tends to be more deadly than seasonal flu and rather than affect the very old and the very young, it attacks those aged 15-45 years.

Seasonal influenza outbreaks are usually caused by an A (bird) or a B (human) type of the virus, and is typically a strain that circulates regularly (each season) among human populations. Often the subtypes vary, but the seasonal vaccine is designed to match these subtypes and offer protection. In the United States our “flu season” can begin as early as October and stretch into April or even early May. The height is often in late December and into January or early February. Seasonal influenza is blamed for nearly 40,000 deaths each year, and most victims are either elderly or very young. Often, the influenza virus weakens the immune system and allows pneumonia to set in, which is usually the cause of death. The flu shot is available through a physician and for most citizens through the local health district.

### FLU FACTS

- An infected person can spread the virus for 24-48 hours before they begin to show symptoms
- Experts believe the virus can live on an exposed surface for at least a day, if not two
- The virus is most commonly spread via droplets released during coughing and sneezing
- Pandemic influenza is always caused by an A type of the virus
- Antivirals may or may not work in the treatment of pandemic influenza - if they are even available



### MORE INFORMATION

- [www.rosscountyhealth.com](http://www.rosscountyhealth.com)
- [www.cdc.gov/flu](http://www.cdc.gov/flu)
- [www.odh.ohio.gov/](http://www.odh.ohio.gov/)
- [www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov)
- [www.fluwikie.com](http://www.fluwikie.com)
- [www.who.int/topics/influenza/en](http://www.who.int/topics/influenza/en)
- [www.birdflutoday.com](http://www.birdflutoday.com)
- [www.nfid.org/influenza](http://www.nfid.org/influenza)
- [www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/habits.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/habits.htm)

Typically, influenza is characterized by a rapid onset of symptoms that include a high fever, a dry hacking cough, sore throat, head ache, muscle aches, general fatigue, a runny or a stuffy nose, and in some cases nausea, vomiting or diarrhea. Symptoms are often the same whether it's seasonal influenza or pandemic influenza, but sometimes they are more severe during a pandemic. More severe cases may require hospitalization, but most people will self-treat at home. Over the counter medications to address the symptoms is the most common treatment, however, a doctor may prescribe antivirals. A big concern is the high fever, especially if the victim is a young child. However, anyone with flu symptoms should take in plenty of liquids (water is the best) to avoid possible dehydration.

### SYMPTOMS AND TREATMENT

Although it is easy to become infected with the influenza virus and not know it, there are some things you can do to protect yourself. First, practice regular hand washing. This is especially important after touching common surfaces such as a door knobs, stair rails or computer keyboards, or when touching money or other items that many people may have handled recently. It's also important that we all practice “respiratory etiquette.” This is the habit of covering coughs and sneezes; of staying home when you are sick, or keeping a loved one home - especially a child who should not be in school or preschool with other children. Social distancing is another method of protection. If you are worried about becoming sick, stay at home or try avoid groups of people. And finally, overall good health (eating right and exercising) may help you to avoid sickness.

### PROTECTION