

# Ventura County Public Health Pocket Guide to Preparing for Pandemic Flu

## Your Safety.

That's why public health is working.

Public Health Department  
Ventura County



Because of the potential for pandemic flu, the Ventura County Public Health Department wants you to know more about this possible health threat. This guide provides you with basic information about pandemic flu and preparedness

A recent outbreak of bird flu virus has killed more than half those infected. It is spreading around the world but has not *yet* been found in birds or people in the United States (Winter 2005-2006).

People get the virus by eating undercooked poultry, by being in contact with an infected bird, or from a person who has caught the virus. You cannot get the virus by eating properly cooked poultry or eggs so *be sure your poultry is fully cooked.*

No vaccine exists for bird flu.

If a pandemic flu outbreak occurs, schools might need to close. Public transportation could be limited and air flights cancelled. Employees may not be able to go to work and many businesses and public services may have to close or limit hours.

People exposed to bird flu could have symptoms for 14 days such as fever, cough, sore throat, muscle aches, shortness of breath and eye infections. Serious cases cause life-threatening breathing problems including pneumonia. It can even cause death.

Treatment depends on how serious the symptoms are. It may include supportive care, anti-viral medicines, or hospitalization. In a pandemic, our resources could be totally overwhelmed.

To protect yourself take the same steps you would to protect yourself against any other flu or cold. (See 'What You Can Do').

Public information in Ventura County, call 211

Local radio & television may broadcast emergency instructions:

KHAY (FM) 100.7	KTRO (AM) 1520
KCAQ (FM) 104.7	KVEN (AM) 1450

Reduce your chances of getting sick and help limit the spread of disease. Up to 1 in 4 people may get seriously ill in a pandemic. Regular services and supplies may not be available.

- Keep healthy: Eat a balanced diet, exercise daily, get enough rest and drink fluids.
- Stay informed: Keep up-to-date on a possible pandemic; listen to radio & television, read news stories and check the internet.
- Wash hands frequently using soap and water.
- Cover coughs and sneezes with tissues. Cough or sneeze into your sleeve, not your hands. Put used tissues in the trash and then wash your hands.
- If you get sick, stay home and away from others as much as possible.
- Don't send sick children to school. If you need child care assistance, call 211.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.

### Make sure you have basic items in an emergency preparedness kit

- Two weeks worth of food for you and your family. This should be food that does not need refrigeration. Foods like canned meats and fish, beans, soups, fruits, and dry goods like flour, salt, and sugar, are good choices.
- Water stored in sealed, unbreakable containers. If water service is disrupted, plan on one gallon for each person for each day, for up to two weeks.
- Two weeks worth of prescription medicines.
- Two weeks worth of ibuprofen or acetaminophen (Tylenol) for each person in the house for fever and pain. A two-week supply of cough medicine.
- Rehydration Solution, for example: Pedialyte for kids, Gatorade for adults and teens.
- Cell phone and charger, and be sure you have a list of important phone numbers.
- Face masks and plastic gloves, especially if you are caring for sick family members.
- Disinfectants and chlorine bleach to make a bleach and water cleaning solution. For More Information

### Ventura County Public Health

<http://www.vchca.org/ph/> Information and Fact Sheets on pandemic flu, avian flu, and isolation & quarantine.

### U.S. Government

<http://www.pandemicflu.gov> Updates on national and international pandemic flu.

### World Health Organization

<http://www.who.int/> Health related travel international disease outbreak information.

### American Red Cross

<http://www.redcross.org> Information on disaster planning and how to make an Emergency Preparedness Plan.

# KEY DIFFERENCES IN SEASONAL AND PANDEMIC FLU

## Seasonal Flu

- Usually follows a regular pattern annually in the winter. Some protection may be built up from having the flu before.
- Healthy adults are not usually at risk for serious complications.
- The medical community can meet public and patient needs.
- Vaccines are developed before the flu season, based on known virus strains.
- Supplies of antiviral drugs are usually available.
- About 36,000 annual US deaths.
- Typical flu symptoms: fever, cough, runny nose, muscle pain.
- A small impact on the community with sick people staying home from work and school.
- Small impact on US and world economy.

## Pandemic Flu

- Rarely happens – only three times in the 20th century. Since this is a new pandemic flu, people have little or no immunity.
- Healthy people may have serious complications.
- Medical providers will be overwhelmed.
- An effective vaccine may not be available for several months.
- Effective antiviral drugs may be unavailable or limited.
- Worldwide deaths could be in the millions.
- Symptoms would be more serious and there would be more medical complications.
- Big community impact: Travel restrictions, school closings, limited business hours or closings, public gatherings cancelled.
- Big impact on US and world economies.

## DURING A PANDEMIC FLU

Things will change during a pandemic. It will be important to keep up-to-date and follow public health orders. You may be asked or required to do things to reduce the spread of the disease. Follow instructions from public health officials or healthcare providers.

If you are sick, stay home. Children should not go to school if they are sick. This will be absolutely necessary to limit the spread of pandemic flu.

Even if you are healthy, you could be asked to stay away from gatherings of people such as sporting events, movies and festivals. During a pandemic flu, these kinds of events could be cancelled because large gatherings of people help spread the flu virus.

**ISOLATION** is separating people who are sick from those who are well. This can help to slow or stop the spread of disease. Isolated people can be cared for in their homes, hospitals, or other healthcare facilities. Isolation is usually voluntary, but local, state and federal government can require isolation of sick people to protect the public.

**QUARANTINE** is for people exposed to the disease but are not sick. People in quarantine are also separated from others. Even though they are not sick yet, they were exposed to the disease and may become infectious and then spread the disease to others. Quarantine can help slow or stop this from happening. States generally have the power to enforce quarantines.

If you or a family member gets sick during a pandemic flu outbreak and are being cared for at home, follow these instructions to control the spread of disease.

### Keep ill family members at home

- The person who is ill should not leave the house unless they are being taken to a medical appointment. The sick person will have to stay home for two weeks after their symptoms begin, even if they are feeling better. Do not have visitors while the person is sick.

- Designate a room(s) only for the ill person(s) so they are separated from other household members. The room(s) should have a door that can be closed.
- The ill person should wear a protective mask when anyone is in the same room or car. People in the room or car with the ill person should also wear a protective mask. Disposable gloves should be used when cleaning or disinfecting any room or area where the sick person has been.

### Wash hands with soap or alcohol-based hand rubs

- Everyone in the household - and it is important to remind children - should wash their hands with soap between contacts with others, before preparing food, and before eating.
- Wash hands after touching tissues or surfaces soiled with saliva or nose drainage.

### Keep your household environment clean

- Use a disinfectant or chlorine bleach mixture and wear gloves to clean surfaces daily including items like phones, doorknobs, toilet seats and handles, faucets, light switches and toys.
- Chlorine bleach can be used as a disinfectant by mixing 1/4 cup chlorine bleach with 1 gallon of cool water.

### Cover nose and mouth when sneezing or coughing

- Remind children and others to cover their noses and mouths with a tissue when sneezing or coughing, or to sneeze or cough into their sleeves.
- Put used tissues in a wastebasket and wash your hands.
- Even if wearing a mask, cough or sneeze into your sleeve.

### Watch all family members for respiratory illness symptoms

- Contact your healthcare provider if you get a fever or symptoms such as chills, cough, sore throat, headache, or muscle aches.

### Make sure supplies are on hand

- Keep supplies of masks, gloves, soap, tissues, paper towels and cleaning supplies on hand.
- Make sure all sinks and restrooms have soap and paper towels.
- Keep tissues in all rooms.