

ESP

FOCUS

Public Health Emergencies



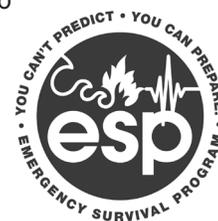
What are Public Health Emergencies?

Public Health Emergencies may be related to outbreaks of infectious illnesses (such as pandemic flu and West Nile virus), food and waterborne illnesses (such as Salmonella, E. coli) as well as other threats to the public's health and safety. Man-made attacks can also create public health emergencies.

Pandemic Flu

A pandemic occurs when a disease spreads causing illness around the world—a global disease outbreak. While many diseases can become a pandemic, influenza (flu) is of special concern because it easily spreads and is constantly changing. And because flu occurs in many animals besides humans, this also increases the chances of it changing and becoming a pandemic. The 2009 H1N1 flu virus was declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization, as the virus spread easily from person to person across more than 200 countries. The H1N1 flu marked the first global flu pandemic since 1968.

Fortunately, the H1N1 flu virus has been mostly mild to moderate thus far, and the vast majority of people who have contracted the virus have recovered without the need for medical attention. However, thousands of people, many with underlying conditions, have died from this virus. The threat of another flu pandemic remains, and everyone should be prepared.” Plus, the simple steps that are recommended to prepare and prevent illness from pandemic flu will also help to prepare you for other emergencies and may prevent other illnesses.



JUNE

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Pandemic, seasonal and bird flu: Do you know the differences?

Pandemic flu, seasonal flu, and bird flu: while many people think they mean the same thing, they are not the same. Do you know the differences?

| | Pandemic Flu | Seasonal Flu | Bird Flu |
|--|--|---|--|
| What is it? | The flu virus is constantly changing, but sometimes it changes so much that the human population has no existing immunity. This new virus can cause much more illness and death than we normally have with seasonal flu. | Seasonal flu has the potential to cause illness every year and usually is worse in the winter months, but can start as early as October and continue to cause illness into the Spring. Because flu viruses are always changing, the flu shot changes almost every year to best protect people from the new strains that are expected. | Many different animals get the flu, including birds. Bird flu is flu among birds. On rare occasions, humans can also become infected from this virus when they have close contact with infected birds. Like human flu viruses, there are many types of bird flu viruses. The type that is causing concern now is called influenza A H5N1. |
| Who is likely to get it? Who is affected? | Everyone. Because we are waiting for a new virus to emerge, everyone (young and old, sick and healthy) are potentially at risk. Unfortunately, we will not know if some groups are more affected than others until the virus shows up and we can see its impact. Similarly, we will not have a vaccine (which is the best protection against seasonal flu) until scientists can study the new virus. | While everyone can get the flu, certain people are more likely to suffer severe consequences including: the elderly, infants, pregnant women, those with weakened immune systems, and those who have chronic illnesses—especially those with respiratory issues like asthma. So we urge those people, and their families, to get the flu shot every fall. However, everyone can benefit from vaccination and can help to reduce the spread of disease in our communities. | The people who get bird flu have had close contact with infected poultry (i.e., plucking and killing chickens sick with bird flu). Most of the people who have become sick and died from bird flu have been in Indonesia and Viet Nam, but sick birds have been found in many countries across Asia and some parts of Europe. This virus is NOT found in animals in the US. You cannot get bird flu from eating chicken or from other bird products (like feather pillows) in the U.S. |

What to do if you get the flu?

The advice your grandmother gave is still the best. When sick; get plenty of rest, drink lots of fluids, and stay home to keep from getting others sick. Simple over-the-counter medicines are usually all people need to feel better (pain relievers, cough drops, etc.). Children should never be given aspirin when they have the flu since it may cause a rare but serious condition called Reye’s Syndrome. Remember antibiotics don’t work for flu viruses. Most people will not need to see a doctor when they have the flu, but if symptoms become very severe (problems breathing, and extreme weakness) and if fever lasts for more than 2-3 days, call your doctor.

Pandemic influenza readiness for you and your family: What can you do?

Many of the simple steps to prepare for a flu pandemic also impact things you should do for a wide range of other emergencies, these include:

1. Talk to your family members. It is important to think about the health issues that could affect you and your family during a pandemic or other emergency. Consider what you will need to care for you and your loved ones in your home.
2. Store food and water. During a pandemic, you and your family may not be able to get to a store, so it is important to have water and food items that won’t spoil (like canned foods) on hand.
3. Create a medical supply kit and a family emergency health information sheet. Include prescription medications, pain relievers, stomach remedies, cough and cold remedies, and first aid materials. List the important medical information that you might need for all of your family, such as: serious health conditions, allergies, and medications that you and your family need.
4. Stay informed. The following are sites where you can learn more about flu and how to stay healthy.

www.flu.gov (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services)
www.cdc.gov/flu (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

- www.ready.gov/america (U.S. Department of Homeland Security)
- www.prepare.org (Red Cross)
- <http://bepreparedcalifornia.ca.gov/EPO/> (California Department of Health Services)
- www.getimmunizedca.org (California Department of Health Services, Immunization Branch)

HEALTH TIP: Get the shot! Prevent the flu!

While pandemic flu is of great concern, seasonal flu causes a great deal of illnesses and death every year. The flu shot is the best way to keep from getting the flu. This year the shot is expected to be available in greater amounts than ever before! While the flu shot is especially important for those who are most likely to get very sick from flu (like the elderly and infants), anyone wishing to get the shot should do so. Even if you are not concerned about getting the flu, people rarely keep their illnesses to themselves—avoid spreading the flu to others. Get the shot and help to keep our communities healthy.

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This information sheet is produced as part of the Emergency Survival Program (ESP). ESP is an awareness campaign designed to increase home, neighborhood, business and school emergency preparedness. ESP was developed by the County of Los Angeles. The California Emergency Management Agency (Cal EMA) and representatives from Contra Costa, Imperial, Inyo, Kern, Los Angeles, Marin, Mono, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, Santa Cruz, and Ventura counties, Southern California Edison, the Southern California Earthquake Center and the American Red Cross assist in the development of campaign materials and coordination of the campaign.



Emergency Survival Program (ESP)

YOU CAN'T PREDICT. YOU CAN PREPARE!

Use the Emergency Survival Program's new list of actions as your guide for personal and community emergency preparedness.

January

Then and Now

In large regional earthquakes, such as the 1906 San Francisco earthquake, or the terrorism acts of September 11, 2001, emergency response agencies might be overwhelmed. You, your neighbors, co-workers and classmates may be forced to take actions on your own. Take time now to learn about what happened then and how it can prepare you for the safety actions to take now.

February

Make a Plan

Planning for an earthquake, terrorist attack, or other emergency is easier than you think. Make sure that your emergency plan includes evacuation and reunion plans; your out-of-state contact person's name and number; the location of your emergency supplies and other pertinent information. By planning now, you will be ready for the next emergency.

March

Make Disaster Kits

Everyone should have disaster supplies kits stored in accessible locations at home, at work and in your vehicle. Having emergency supplies readily available can reduce the impact of an earthquake, a terrorist incident or other emergency on you and your family. Your disaster supplies kits should include food, water, flashlights, portable radios, batteries, a first aid kit, cash, extra medications, a whistle, fire extinguisher, etc.

April

Floods

Storms can cause flash floods, create power outages and damage homes. Assemble emergency supplies to include sand bags; identify safe routes; and teach children to avoid areas of potential flooding. When flooding occurs, listen to the radio or watch television for information and instructions.

May

Terrorism

Fear is a major tactic used by terrorists to achieve political and social objectives. But the terrorists are not in charge. You can fight back by taking many of the same actions you would to prepare for earthquakes, fires, and other emergencies. Start by having a family emergency plan. Also assemble emergency supply kits at home, at work, and in your car.

June

Public Health Emergencies

Public Health Emergencies may be related to outbreaks of infectious diseases, food and waterborne illnesses, and other threats to the public's health and safety. Pandemic flu is of concern and health experts recommend the following to prevent the spread of flu: wash your hands with soap and water frequently; cover your cough and sneeze; stay home if you are sick. Stay away from others so they will not become sick. In autumn, get the flu shot!

July

Heat Wave

Although sun is necessary, exposure to ultraviolet radiation is potentially dangerous and can damage skin. Heat injuries that can occur include sunburn, heat cramps, heat exhaustion and heatstroke. If your home is not air-conditioned, spend time in public facilities like public libraries, malls, and community centers that are air-conditioned. Never leave children or pets unattended in hot vehicles.

August

Drop, Cover, and Hold On!

Learn what to do during an earthquake, whether you're at home, at work, at school or just out and about. Taking the proper actions, such as "Drop, Cover, and Hold On", can save lives and reduce your risk of death or injury. During earthquakes, drop to the floor, take cover under a sturdy desk or table, and hold on to it firmly. Be prepared to move with it until the shaking stops. If you are at the beach, move to higher ground.

September

Back to School

Schools should have emergency plans to meet the threat of terrorism, earthquakes and other emergencies. They should be updated and exercised regularly. Emergency supplies, such as water, food and other basic items, are also an important part of school preparedness. If you are a parent or guardian, know your child's school emergency plan and make sure they have your updated emergency contact information.

October

Earthquakes

No one knows when the next earthquake will happen, but we can reduce its impact by being prepared. Identify hazards and remove or reduce them. Store emergency supplies and replenish them annually. Educate your family where to drop, cover, and hold on and take a first aid course. Conduct practice drills on a regular basis.

November

Fire and Ice

Preparedness is the key to surviving wildland fires and lethal winter storms. Timely preparation, including structural and non-structural measures to avoid the impacts of wildland fires and severe winter weather, can help reduce heavy repair expenditures following an event. Also remember to keep your car and other vehicles fueled and in good repair in case you are asked to evacuate. Have your emergency survival kit ready to go with you, just in case.

December

Landslides and Mudslides

Significant property damage can be caused by landslides and mudslides. Prepare an evacuation kit to include important documents and irreplaceable items such as photographs. When it rains, monitor the amount of rainfall and look for warning signs of landslides and mudslides such as new springs, tilted trees or new holes in hillsides.

Additional campaign materials are available through your local County Office of Emergency Management.

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