



HALDIMAND-NORFOLK HEALTH UNIT

# Public Health Emergency Preparedness

Public Awareness Pandemic Planning Guide



# What is a Public Health Emergency?

## Public health emergencies could be due to:

**Infectious Disease Outbreaks** – Increase in cases of a disease caused by a virus, bacteria or parasite such as influenza or salmonella that becomes severe and affects a large part of the population.

**Bioterrorism** – Deliberate release of bacteria, viruses or toxins that cause illness or death in humans or animals .

**Natural Disasters** – Floods, wildfires and extreme hot or cold weather can lead to disruptions such as power outages and mass evacuations.

**Chemical Disaster** – Chemicals are released that have the potential to harm people. These can be released unintentionally (e.g., industrial accidents) or intentionally (due to terrorism). Examples of harmful chemicals are chlorine, ammonia and benzene. Chemical terrorism may use nerve agents, mustards and choking agents.

**Radiation Disaster** – Nuclear power plant accidents or terrorism where people are exposed to radiation.

## What is seasonal influenza (flu)?

It is a contagious respiratory illness caused by different flu viruses. In Canada, flu season is typically November through April. Flu spreads when droplets containing the virus, released through coughing or sneezing, come into contact with another person's mouth, nose or eyes. Flu also spreads when people touch surfaces (e.g., doorknobs) that have recently been contaminated with the virus and then touch their faces.

## What is the difference between the flu and a pandemic?


A flu pandemic is a new strain of the flu virus that may cause severe illness and/or death as people will have little or no resistance to the new virus. Pandemic impacts can be catastrophic, as occurred with the 1918 Spanish flu, or less severe as occurred with the influenza pandemics in 1957 and 1968.

## What is avian flu and why is it important to monitor?

It is a disease caused by influenza viruses carried and spread easily among birds. The bird flu viruses spread year-round among birds and are not easily spread to humans. Public health experts monitor any virus that may cause a new pandemic. The current avian flu outbreak (H5N1) has been spreading among birds since 1999. So far, the virus has caused serious illness in a small number of humans, most having direct contact with sick birds. For these cases, symptoms have been similar to the typical seasonal flu, such as fever, cough, aching muscles and a sore throat. Many of the sick have had severe pneumonia and have died. It is possible that the avian flu virus will change and become easily spread among humans. This would result in a pandemic. If that happens, nobody knows if the symptoms would stay the same or if they would be milder. For more information about avian influenza, visit the World Health Organization website <http://www.who.int>.

## What is my risk?

At this time, risk of an influenza pandemic in the Haldimand-Norfolk area is very low. It is difficult to predict when the next flu pandemic will occur or how severe it will be. Therefore, it is important to be prepared. If a pandemic does occur, it will be worldwide and everyone will be affected in some way. To minimize your risks in general, adopt safe food and infection prevention practices. The next two pages provide general household preparedness tips for public health emergencies.



You can play an active role in staying healthy and preventing the spread of influenza, whether it's the seasonal flu that circulates each winter or pandemic influenza. Follow these guidelines:

- **Get an annual flu shot**

Make sure your family members get a flu shot too! The flu shot might not protect you from a pandemic flu virus, but will help protect you from getting the seasonal flu.

- **If you are sick, stay home!**

If you go out when you're sick, you may spread your illness to co-workers, classmates, neighbours or others. It may take you longer to get better if you are not well-rested. Wait until you no longer have a fever and practice the steps below:

- **Wash your hands frequently**

Remember to wash before and after eating, after using the bathroom, after coughing or sneezing and after touching surfaces that may have been contaminated by other people.

- **Cover up when you cough or sneeze**

Use a tissue, or raise your arm up to your face to cough or sneeze into your sleeve. If you use a tissue, dispose of it as soon as possible and wash your hands immediately or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

- **Keep shared surface areas clean**

Doorknobs, light switches, telephones, keyboards and other surfaces can become contaminated with bacteria and viruses. Regular cleaning and disinfecting of these surfaces can help decrease contact with these bacteria and viruses.

- **Be a good role model and talk about staying healthy**

Encourage others to follow these simple guidelines. If you have children, be a good role model. Teach them to count to 20 while washing their hands and show them how to cover up when they cough or sneeze.

(Adapted from the Public Health Agency of Canada, Flu Prevention Checklist, March 2006.)

Knowing safe food handling practices is an important part of preparedness. Properly storing and preparing foods can prevent food-borne illnesses during all types of emergencies. Remember, it is always important to thoroughly cook foods such as meat and eggs.

During a power outage, carefully inspect all food items and do not eat any food you think may be unsafe. Remember, when in doubt, throw it out. A freezer should keep food frozen for about 24 hours during a power failure, if the freezer is kept closed.

A refrigerator will keep food cool for four to six hours. Put ice, if available, in the refrigerator to maintain temperature.

Discard any thawed food that has remained at room temperature for two or more hours and any food that has an obviously strange colour or odour. Remember that food contaminated with bacteria does not necessarily smell or appear spoiled.

*(Adapted from the Canadian Food Inspection Agency)*

Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Canada has developed an extensive preparation guide for all emergencies (natural, technological and human-made) called “72 Hours...Are you prepared?” This guide is available by calling:

**1-800 O-Canada** (1-800-622-6232) or TTY: 1-800-926-9105 for a free copy.

The following are important telephone numbers specific to the Haldimand-Norfolk area to assist you in your emergency planning:  
*(There is a list of web resources available on personal preparedness and pandemic planning on page 18)*

# Primary Municipal Services in Haldimand-Norfolk

## Haldimand-Norfolk Health Unit

Simcoe – 519-426-6170

Caledonia – 905-318-5367

Langton – 519-875-4485

Dunnville – 905-774-3333

After Hours – 1-877-298-5888

## Police/Fire/EMS

**Police** – Cayuga Office, 905- 772-3322

Simcoe Office, 519-426-3434

**Fire – Haldimand**

Cayuga, 905-318-5367

Dunnville, 905-318-3272

**Norfolk**

Simcoe, 519-426-4115

**EMS** – Haldimand, 905-318-0159

Norfolk, 519-426-4115

## Public Works

Haldimand – 905-318-5962

Norfolk – 519-582-2100 or 519-428-0020

## Social Services

Haldimand: Business Hours – 905-318-6623

After Hours – 1-877-298-5888

Norfolk: Business Hours – 519-426-6170

After Hours – 1-877-298-5888

# Primary Non-Municipal Services in Haldimand-Norfolk

## Hospitals

Haldimand War Memorial Hospital – Dunnville, 905-774-7431  
West Haldimand Hospital – Hagersville, 905-768-3311  
Norfolk General Hospital – Simcoe, 519-426-0750  
West St. Health Centre – Simcoe, 519-428-0432

## Labs

All hospitals – same numbers as above  
Hamilton Public Health Lab – 905-385-5379  
London Public Health Lab – 519-455-9310  
Toronto Central Public Health Lab – 416-235-6132

## General

CCAC – 1-800-265-8068

Salvation Army: Dunnville – 905-774-4251  
Simcoe – 519-426-3640

Telehealth Ontario – 1-866-797-0000

Poison Control Centre – 1-800-268-9017



# Develop Your Pandemic Plan

## Pandemic Flu Planning Checklist for Individuals and Families

You should know both the magnitude of what can happen during a pandemic and what actions you can take to help lessen the impact 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 two-week 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.
- Periodically check your regular prescription drugs to ensure a continuous supply in your home. Consider also special needs (e.g., allergy shots, medical services, that may not be fulfilled in a pandemic).
- Have non-prescription drugs and other health supplies on hand, including pain relievers, stomach remedies, cough and cold medicines, fluids with electrolytes, and vitamins.
- Get your family's immunizations up to date.
- 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:

- Teach your children to wash hands frequently with soap and water, and model the current behaviour.
- Teach your children to cover coughs and sneezes with tissues, and be sure to model that behaviour.
- 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:

#### Examples of food and non-perishables

- Ready-to-eat canned meats, fish, fruits, vegetables, beans and soups
- Protein or fruit bars
- Dry cereal or granola
- Peanut butter or nuts
- Dried fruit
- Crackers
- Canned juices
- Bottled water-minimum 2 litres per person per day
- Canned or jarred baby food and formula
- Pet food & water
- Other non-perishable foods
- Tetra – packed milk or soy beverage

#### Examples of medical, health and emergency supplies

- Prescribed medical supplies such as glucose and blood-pressure-monitoring equipment
- Soap and water, or alcohol-based (60-95%) hand wash, wet ones (baby wipes)
- Medicine for fever, such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen
- Thermometer
- Anti-diarrheal medication
- Vitamins
- Fluids with electrolytes (sport drinks, pedialyte)
- Cleansing agent/soap
- Flashlight
- Batteries
- Portable radio
- Manual can opener
- Garbage bags
- Tissues, toilet paper, disposable diapers, feminine hygiene
- Candles and matches/lighter
- General first aid kit
- Cough and cold medicine
- Cash and change

# Limiting the Spread: Travel, Social Contact and Pandemic Flu

## Travel Guidelines During An Influenza Pandemic

During an influenza pandemic, social distancing measures may be implemented to limit the spread of the disease. Depending on the severity of the pandemic, international, domestic and even local public transport and travel may be restricted, suspended or modified.

If you are sick, stay home and keep away from other people as much as possible.

If long-distance domestic or international travel is permitted and you are feeling well and you must travel, observe the following recommendations to limit your chances of getting sick:

### What Should I Do Before I Travel?

Get the most current available seasonal flu vaccine to avoid being infected with circulating flu viruses.

Make sure your immunizations for the country you are visiting are up-to-date.

Purchase supplementary insurance when travelling outside of Canada as many emergency health services provided outside of the country cost much more than your Ontario Health Insurance Plan may pay. You should also consider the possibility of medical evacuation coverage.

Educate yourself and others who may be travelling with you about the risk of influenza in areas you plan to visit. Check the Department of Foreign and International Trade Canada website at [www.voyage.gc.ca](http://www.voyage.gc.ca).

Assemble a travel health kit containing basic first aid and medical supplies. Get the right advice about this from your travel agent or provider.

Pack hand sanitizer containing 60% to 90% alcohol in your luggage and carry-on as permitted.

Identify health care resources in the countries you plan to visit before your trip.

## What Should I Do While I'm Travelling?

Performing frequent and proper hand hygiene is the most important step you can take to reduce your chances of infection. Clean your hands often, using either soap or warm, running water or hand sanitizers, containing 60% to 90% alcohol.

Reduce direct social contact (e.g., kissing, shaking hands). Stay away from mass social gatherings and crowded public places as much as possible.

Avoid direct contact with poultry, including touching well-appearing, sick, or dead chickens and ducks. Avoid places such as poultry farms and bird markets where live poultry are raised or kept.

If you are preparing your own food, ensure that all foods from poultry, including eggs, are thoroughly cooked.

Ensure all birds and poultry products you wish to bring into Canada are eligible for entry and declare all animal products upon arrival.

If you have visited a farm while in an affected country, ensure that clothing and footwear worn on the farm are free from soil and manure before entering Canada.

## What Should I Do After I Travel?

You can be infected with the flu without displaying any symptoms or feeling sick. To avoid infecting others and spreading the virus, follow these recommendations:

- Wash your clothing in hot water and disinfect your footwear after arrival, especially if you have visited a farm.
- Monitor your health for at least 14 days after returning to Canada. If you become ill with fever, have difficulty breathing, cough or show any signs of illness during this period, consult a health care professional. Tell her/him about your symptoms and recent travel to confirm whether you have visited an area reporting an outbreak of pandemic influenza.

For more Information, visit the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care website at:

[www.health.gov.on.ca/pandemic](http://www.health.gov.on.ca/pandemic).

Call INFOline 1-866-801-7242  
TTY 1-800-387-5559

# Individual and Family Plans

Depending on the severity of the pandemic, many aspects of everyday life could be disrupted. These disruptions could include everything from school and business closings to the interruption of basic services such as public transportation and health care. An especially severe influenza pandemic could lead to high levels of illness, death, social disruption and economic loss. Below are a series of questions that you should consider in your pandemic flu planning.

## At Work

- Does my employer have a pandemic business plan?
- What options are available at work if I need to care for a sick family member?
- What information will my colleagues and I need to know if one or more people in our workplace becomes ill and what actions will need to be taken?
- What will I do if my income is reduced or lost if I am unable to work or the business is closed?
- If my work is going to be critical in a pandemic, discuss strategies to care for ill family members with my employer.

## At School/daycare

- What plans have the schools/daycares made for pandemic influenza?
- If the school/daycare closes, who will care for my children?

## In the Community

- What is my community's emergency response plan?
- What other information sources are available (e.g., public health hotlines)?
- Are there people in my community, such as elderly neighbours, single parents of small children, or people without adequate resources, who may require special assistance.

## Developing your pandemic flu plan

**Complete an emergency contact sheet** that contains the names, phone numbers and addresses of the following individuals or organizations:

- Local personal emergency contact (such as a family member or close friend).
- Out-of-town emergency contact.
- Hospitals near work, school and home.
- Family physician.
- Public health department.
- Pharmacy.
- Employer contact and emergency information.
- School contact and emergency information.
- Animal hospital.

**Complete an emergency health information sheet** that includes the following information for each family member:

- Name.
- Allergies.
- Past and current medical conditions.
- Current medications and dosages.
- A Personal Emergency Kit Checklist.

Keep your emergency contacts and emergency health information sheets with your emergency kit for quick reference.

**Note:** It is important to review your plan every six months to ensure it's up to date. The change from Daylight Savings Time to Standard Time is a good reminder to update your emergency plans and kits.

## Discuss your pandemic flu plan

Now that you've gathered all of the facts and supplies, you are ready to sit down with your family or loved ones to discuss your pandemic flu plan. It is very important to share your vital information with someone you trust, especially if you live alone, are a single parent or a caregiver.

If you are part of a family with young children, it is also important for you to talk to them about items in your emergency kit, when and how to use them and where the kit will be stored.

For more information on what the Government of Ontario is doing to plan for a pandemic, contact the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care website at:

[www.health.gov.on.ca/pandemic](http://www.health.gov.on.ca/pandemic).

INFOline 1-866-801-7242

TTY 1-800-387-5559

## What You Can Do for Yourself During a Flu Pandemic

### What to Expect

- **Day 1-3:** Sudden appearance of fever, headache, muscle pain and weakness; also dry cough, sore throat and stuffed nose.
- **Day 4:** Fever and muscle aches decrease. Hoarse, dry or sore throat, cough and possible mild chest discomfort become more noticeable.
- **Day 8:** Symptoms decrease. Cough and tiredness may last one to two weeks or more.



### If any of the following occurs during the flu, SEEK MEDICAL ATTENTION:

(Call your doctor, Emergency Medical Service (EMS), health helpline, or go to an emergency room.)

- You are short of breath even while resting.
- You have pain in your chest when you breathe.
- You have heart disease and develop chest pain.
- You are coughing up bloody sputum.
- You are wheezing.
- You still have a fever and are not feeling better after five days.
- You are feeling better and suddenly you develop a fever.
- You or others note that you are extremely drowsy or are confused/disoriented.

### If you are affected during a flu pandemic, you should:

- **Rest.** You will probably feel very weak until your temperature returns to normal.
- **Take fluids.** Extra fluids are needed to replace those lost in sweating. If your urine is dark, you need more to drink. Warm fluids help loosen mucus.
- **Take acetaminophen** – one or two tablets every six hours or ibuprofen as recommended on the package for fever and muscle pain. Children under 18 years of age should not take acetylsalicylic acid (ASA) or any products containing ASA. Antibiotics won't help.
- **Treat your symptoms** with a cough suppressant if you have a dry cough.
- **Stay home from work/school** for six days (while you are contagious) or until you are feeling better.
- **Ask for help from family/friends** if you live alone, are a single parent with small children, etc. and are having a hard time taking care of your own/your family's needs.



## What You Can Do for Your Infant or Young Child During a Flu Pandemic

### What to Expect

- **Day 1-3:** Sudden appearance of fever, headache, muscle pain and weakness; also dry cough, sore throat and stuffed nose.
- **Day 4:** Fever and muscle aches decrease. Hoarse, dry or sore throat, cough and possible mild chest discomfort become more noticeable.
- **Day 8:** Symptoms decrease. Cough and tiredness may last one to two weeks or more.

**During the flu, TAKE YOUR CHILD TO SEE A DOCTOR if the child displays any of the following:**

- Is short of breath even while resting.
- Has pain in the chest when breathing.
- Is coughing up bloody sputum.
- Is wheezing.
- Still has a fever and is not feeling better after five days.
- Is feeling better and suddenly develops a fever.
- Is hard to wake up, unusually sleepy or unresponsive.
- Allow your child to rest. The child will probably feel very weak until his or her temperature returns to normal.
- Offer fluids frequently while awake. Extra fluids are needed to replace those lost in sweating. If your child's urine is darker than usual, he or she needs more to drink.
- Give your child acetaminophen every six hours or ibuprofen as recommended on the package for fever and muscle pain. Children under 18 years of age should not take acetylsalicylic acid (ASA) or any products containing ASA. Antibiotics won't help.
- Treat your child's symptoms e.g., cough suppressant, salt water nose drops. Teach the child to cover his or her mouth when coughing and then throw the tissue away. Wash your hands often and teach your child to do so as well.
- Teach your children to cover his or her cough and sneeze with their sleeve if a tissue is not available.
- Keep your child home from school for six days (while contagious), or until he or she is feeling better.




## Self Care During a Flu Pandemic

Much of the time, home treatment and self care can relieve most symptoms and reduce the risk of further problems. If you get the flu, ways to monitor and improve your health at home include:

- **Stay home if you are sick.** This will ensure that you get the rest you need and that you don't spread the virus to others.
- **Drink lots of fluids.** This includes water, real juice, milk and herbal teas. It is best to have drinks without caffeine, because caffeine actually makes you lose fluid from your body.
- **Take basic pain/fever relievers.** Examples are acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen. Acetylsalicylic acid (ASA or Aspirin) should NOT be given to children or teenagers!
- **Use a hot water bottle or heating pad.** Applying heat carefully, for short periods of time, can help reduce muscle pain. Check the skin often when using a heating pad because the pad can cause burns and blisters.
- **Take cough medicine.** This helps especially if you have a dry cough.
- **Get lots of rest.**
- **Take a warm bath with Epsom salts.**
- **Gargle with a glass of warm water and/or suck on sugarless hard candy or lozenges.** They can ease your sore throat.
- **Use saline drops or spray or decongestants.** These help soothe or clear a stuffed nose.
- **Avoid alcohol and tobacco.** Smoking especially irritates damaged airways.
- **Avoid sharing anything that may carry germs** such as towels, lipstick, cigarettes, drinks or toys.
- **Wash your hands often.** Use soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds each time, or alcohol-based hand rubs if your hands do not look dirty. This will help you avoid spreading the flu to others.
- **Ask your pharmacist for advice if you buy over-the-counter medicine.** Let him or her know if you have any chronic medical problems.
- **Call someone to help you until you are feeling better.** This is especially important if you are alone, are a single parent, or are responsible for the care of someone who is frail or disabled.





For seasonal flu, most healthy people feel better in about five to seven days. However, general tiredness and cough can last much longer, up to two to three weeks. For pandemic flu, it is not known whether it will take longer to get better.

During a flu pandemic, many people will be sick and it may be difficult to get medical care. For this reason, it is very important to be prepared to take care of yourself and others at home as much as possible.

There are antiviral drugs that can be prescribed by a doctor to treat the flu. During a pandemic, however, these antivirals are going to be in very short supply and will likely only be available for those people who are most likely to get sick or die from the flu, or for those persons who work in essential services such as health care, firefighters, police, etc. At this point, it is not certain that these drugs will help.

Because you may need to be home for a time during the pandemic, it is a good idea to stock up on some basic supplies, such as food and water, for several days. (See “Emergency Stockpile” sheet.) Make sure you have several days supply of your regular medications on hand, and have a list of phone numbers for family, friends, neighbours, and your doctor.

# Website Resources for Personal Emergency Preparedness and Pandemic Planning

Haldimand-Norfolk Health Unit

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

Canadian Government Official Website for Pandemic Planning

[www.influenza.gc.ca/](http://www.influenza.gc.ca/)

Public Health Agency of Canada FluWatch

[www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/fluwatch/index.html](http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/fluwatch/index.html)

Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care Pandemic Planning

[www.health.gov.on.ca/index.html](http://www.health.gov.on.ca/index.html)

Emergency Management Ontario

[www.mpss.jus.gov.on.ca/english/pub\\_security/emo/about\\_emo.html](http://www.mpss.jus.gov.on.ca/english/pub_security/emo/about_emo.html)

Ontario Chamber of Commerce, Pandemic Planning Tool Kit

[www.occ.on.ca](http://www.occ.on.ca)

Canadian Red Cross

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

Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB)

[www.wsib.on.ca](http://www.wsib.on.ca)

Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (CCOHS)

[www.ccohs.ca/pandemic/](http://www.ccohs.ca/pandemic/)

Download a free copy of this booklet:

<http://www.hnhu.org>

Visit the link to *Pandemic Planning* on the home page for additional information,  
or call the Communicable Disease Program:

905-318-5367 **OR** 519-426-6170







Simcoe: 519.426.6170 or 905.318.6623

Caledonia: 905.318.5367

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