



Pandemic Flu Preparation: Hold Family Meetings

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"Pandemics are global in nature, but their impact is local. When the next pandemic strikes, as it surely will, it is likely to touch the lives of every individual, family, and community. Our task is to make sure that when this happens, we will be a Nation prepared."

Michael O. Leavitt, Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Yes, we can expect our lives to be "touched" by an avian influenza pandemic. Our diets and daily routines will be altered, and the concern of all of us will be to protect ourselves and our families. Since we don't know how serious the pandemic may be in our communities, it only pays to prepare. Advance planning can make our homes safe and comfortable. It's not an overwhelming task, and there are many guidelines to help. Look at it this way: The better we are prepared, the better we will respond and rebound, and when it's all over, the better and stronger will be our families, community, and state.

Plan together; better yet, bring your current emergency family plan up-to-date

It is best to prepare well ahead of a possible pandemic flu by having a series of family meetings. Set a time when everyone can meet for 30-45 minutes.

Young children may not be able to sit still for a whole meeting, so involve them early and dismiss them to play, if necessary. They will still feel they are part of the planning.

It is important to prepare your children for disasters. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) (www.fema.gov/kids) has excellent materials, as does the American Academy of Pediatrics at <http://www.aap.org/family/frk/frkit.htm> to share with

children as you prepare your family for pandemic flu or any other disaster.

First family meeting

During this meeting:

1. Discuss pandemic influenza and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) tips on respiratory hygiene at <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/infectioncontrol/resphygiene.htm>
2. Complete the CDC family emergency health information sheet at <http://www.pandemicflu.gov/plan-guide/familyhealthinfo.html>

Completing this form will alert you to the medications and medical supplies you and your family might need

to stock up on. This form will also be useful in the event you or your family need medical attention during an outbreak.

3. Designate a family member to check that all legal documents including wills and insurances are up-to-date. Make sure all family legal documents such as birth certificates, wills, passports, and insurance policies are in a safe place and the location known by more than one family member.

To date the mortality rate for H5N1 has been a little over 50%. It may sound monstrous, but families need to plan now for the possibility of a family member's death, recognizing that traditional funeral services may not be possible during a pandemic.

Information on talking to children about death is at <http://ndsuxt.nodak.edu/extpubs/yf/famsci/fs441w.htm>

4. Set a time for your next meeting and give out homework assignments. Ask family members to come to the second meeting prepared to discuss and plan:
- Who will care for sick family members?
 - Who will take care of well family members?
 - Who will care for grandparents, aunts, uncles, or neighbors who may be living alone or have special needs?
 - What if a family member is away from home when the pandemic happens—a college student or a someone traveling for business or pleasure? Start filling out the family communications plan form at http://www.ready.gov/america/_downloads/family_communications_plan.pdf
 - If schools and child care facilities close, who will take care of the children?

Second family meeting

Review the homework assignments and make a written plan to answer these questions. Complete, cut out, and hand the cards from the family communications plan form (4d above) to each member of the family to carry. Completion of this form will ensure everyone knows how the family will communicate in the event of a disaster, and the form includes wallet-sized cards.

Schedule a third meeting to talk about the food, water, emergency supplies, special need items, and medications your family will need for 2 to 6 weeks. Experts are saying we should plan for a minimum of 2 weeks

and it would be better to plan for 6 weeks. We may need to isolate ourselves from social commerce to stay as safe as possible from the pandemic flu virus.

It is expected there will be two or three waves of influenza, so it could be that your family will be socially distanced from contact with others several times in an 18-month period.

Third family meeting

- Make a list of emergency supplies including special needs items.
- Make a list of nonperishable foods your family will consume if homebound for several weeks. There's no need to be spartan about this; include some "comfort foods" your family likes.

To help you make your lists, Table 1 gives a list of medical, health, and emergency supplies and Table 2 gives examples of nonperishable foods to have on hand. Both tables are on the next page.

There are other nonperishable items than those listed in Table 2 that might interest your family, such as beef jerky, pancake mixes, cake mixes, drink mixes, dried milk, macaroni and cheese, etc. However, keep in mind these products will either increase water consumption or require water for preparation.

It is possible we could have a snowstorm, blizzard, or ice storm during a pandemic outbreak. So we must plan not only to live without access to food but also water and utilities for cooking and heat. It may be a lot like camping out in your house.

If schools and child care facilities are closed or social distancing is necessary, plan in this meeting what activities you and your family will do, including those that can be done without electricity. Use your collective imagination. Everybody in the family meeting will have ideas, so make a list—puzzles, games, videos, cards, books, new toys for children and pets bought now and hidden away until for this moment, etc.

Fourth family meeting

Bring your family together and review the plan and make sure what you have planned will work. Make up several scenarios, try out your plan, and fix it if needed.

Planning for a pandemic, in fact, is never finished because we will be learning more and more about the disease, its spread, its possible containment, and new ways to keep ourselves and our families safe. And if pandemic flu never strikes, you are prepared for just about any disaster that may occur.

Extension Extras in this Pandemic Flu Preparation series:
ExEx13002, Hold family meetings
ExEx13003, Food and water supplies and storage
ExEx13004, If we don't have utilities how do we cook, keep things clean?
ExEx13005, Saving up for an emergency
ExEx13006, The workplace and the community

Table 1. Medical, health, and emergency supplies to have on hand for an extended stay at home.

- Prescription medicines
- Medical supplies such as glucose, blood pressure monitoring equipment, first aid kit, and adult diapers, etc.
- Over-the-counter medicines such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen, antacids, cough syrup, vitamins, anti-diarrheal medications, etc.
- Fluids with electrolytes
- Shampoos, detergents, and other cleaning agents
- Soap and alcohol based (60-95%) hand wash
- Toilet paper
- Tissues, paper plates, and other paper products
- Flashlight(s)
- Batteries
- Portable radio
- Manual can opener
- Garbage bags
- Fuel supply for cooking, such as charcoal or propane.

Table 2. Examples of nonperishable food and drinks to have on hand for an extended stay at home.

- Ready to eat canned meats, fish, vegetables, beans, soups, chili, and other canned or processed meals (like stews, ready meals, etc). The large variety of these products commercially available makes it easy for a family to buy and store foods that are nutritious and can provide variety in the diet.
- Commercially prepared jerky
- Protein or fruit bars
- Dry cereals
- Peanut butter, nut butters, and nuts
- Canned and dried fruit
- Crackers
- Canned juices
- Coffee and tea
- Canned or jarred baby food and formula
- Pet food
- Ultra-High Temperature (UTH) milk or soy milk
- Comfort foods such as candy, cookies, and popcorn

Information on how much food to store and water storage is in ExEx13003.

This publication can be accessed electronically from the SDSU College of Agriculture & Biological Sciences publications page at <http://agbiopubs.sdstate.edu/articles/ExEx13002.pdf> or from the Extension Service Avian Flu/Pandemic Flu Information Website at <http://sdces.sdstate.edu/avianflu/>