

Importance and benefits of being prepared

It is difficult to predict how severe pandemic influenza will be. The effects of a pandemic can be lessened if preparations are made ahead of time. A pandemic can touch every aspect of society, and so every aspect of society must be prepared. On a region, provincial, national and global level, the health system is developing, improving and testing plans for an influenza pandemic. Other community organizations are preparing as well. Individuals and families need to develop plans and be prepared in for a pandemic. For reliable, accurate and timely information, visit the Public Health Agency of Canada's website at <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/>.

The benefits of preparation will be many. Communities and individuals will be better prepared for any disaster. Preparation will bring peace of mind and the confidence that we are ready to fight a flu pandemic.

Possible disruptions you need to consider

As you plan, it is important to think about the challenges that you might face, particularly if a pandemic is severe. It may take time to find the answer to these challenges. The following are some situations that could be caused by a severe pandemic.

Life changes when pandemic influenza strikes

- Plan for the possibility that public services may be disrupted at hospitals and community services, banks, stores, restaurants, government offices, post offices and waste management.
- Prepare backup plans in case public gatherings, such as volunteer meetings and worship services, are cancelled.
- Consider how to care for children or dependent relatives in case the services they rely on are not available.

Working may be difficult or impossible

- Consider working from home.
- Talk to your employer about their preparation and planning in the event of a pandemic. Ask about how business will continue during a pandemic.
- Plan for a possible reduction or loss of income if you are unable to work or your place of employment is closed.
- Check with your employer or union about leave policies.

Schools and child care centres may be closed

- Talk with your child's school or care provider about their preparations and planning in the event of a pandemic.
- Plan home learning (school work), physical and recreational activities that children can do at home.
- Consider who could assist you with child care, elder care and care for pets.

Transportation may be disrupted

- You may not be able to travel to visit or take care of loved ones who are far away.
- Prepare backup plans for care of loved ones who are far away.
- If you car pool, consider other ways to get to work, or if you can, work at home.

People will need advice and help at home and work

- Share information you have about essential functions you perform at work with the people in your workplace so they can operate without you in an emergency.
- Find volunteer who will help people in need, such as elderly neighbours, single parents of small children or people without the resources to get the help they will need.
- Identify other information resources in your community such as the Newfoundland and Labrador HealthLine, mental health hotlines, etc.
- Find support systems and share ideas.

Get prepared

During a pandemic you may not be able to get to a store. Even if you can get to a store, it may be out of supplies. Public utility services may also be interrupted. While the Government of Canada recommends that people prepare a 72 hour supply of goods in case of an emergency, you may consider other factors in determining the appropriate amount of supplies for you and your family, such as:

- A pandemic normally comes in waves and each wave can be expected to last approximately eight weeks.
- We live on an island and are dependant on the shipment of many goods and services from mainland Canada.
- During the winter months, it is not uncommon to have extreme weather conditions.

Consider gathering a supply of:

- bottled water (1 to 3 litres per day per person)
- non-perishable food (such as canned foods) that do not require refrigeration and is easy to prepare in case you are unable to cook.
- medication (both prescription and non-prescription)

In addition, consider gathering:

- a first aid kit
- light sources (flashlights, batteries, candles, matches)
- emergency contact names and number
- a battery operated radio
- other emergency supplies (extra clothing, cash on hand, pet supplies)

Visit <http://www.getprepared.ca/> for more information on preparing for an emergency.

Stay informed

Knowing the facts will help you plan for and manage pandemic influenza. Identify sources you can count on for reliable information. Having accurate and reliable information will be critical.

- Reliable, accurate, and timely information is available at www.phac-aspc.gc.ca.
- Other sources of information on pandemic influenza are:
 - World Health Organization www.who.int/en
 - Department of Health and Community Services www.gov.nl.ca/health
 - www.fightflu.ca
 - www.lghealth.ca
 - Call the the Labrador-Grenfell Health H1N1 information line at **1-877-896-0422**.
 - The Public Health Agency of Canada's toll-free public information line, available Monday to Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. EST. The number is 1-800-454-8302.
 - Residents of Newfoundland and Labrador can also contact the Newfoundland and Labrador HealthLine, it's available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The number is 1-888-709-2929.
 - Listen to local and national radio, watch news reports on television and read your newspaper and other sources of printed and web-based information.
- Talk to your local health care providers and public health officials.