

This fact sheet provides information on how to prepare for Sheltering in place in the event of a possible flu pandemic.

Background

A severe pandemic (defined as a worldwide epidemic) in a vulnerable population, such as the 1918 flu pandemic, represents a worst-case scenario for pandemic planning and preparedness. Communities, individuals, employers, schools, and other organizations are being asked to plan for the use of interventions that will help limit the spread of disease. At this time, there is concern because of continued spread of a highly pathogenic avian influenza (H5N1) virus among animals in Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and Europe that has the potential to significantly threaten human health. If a virus such as H5N1 mutates and spreads easily from one person to another, avian influenza may break out globally. While there are no reports of *sustained* human-to-human transmission of avian influenza, governments and international health agencies are preparing for a possible pandemic. A pandemic can originate from any unknown source, such as the H5N1 virus.

Depending on the severity of a pandemic, commercial airlines might drastically curtail or even cease operations. Travel restrictions could also impede people from returning to their home country or fleeing to other countries. For these reasons, it may make more sense to shelter in place (stay home and practice social distancing to avoid infection) for an appropriate period of time.

Preparation

Families should prepare at least two weeks of emergency supplies (food, water, medicines, and so forth) in order to shelter in place during an influenza pandemic. Consult “Preparation for Home Emergencies and Natural Disasters” under Provident Living at www.lds.org.

Living Internationally

Those living in areas with undependable infrastructure for water, electricity, and food availability should evaluate their situation and prepare emergency supplies accordingly (nonperishable food, potable water, medicines, and so forth.) for the possibility of sheltering in place for at least 2 and up to 12 weeks. Water purification techniques for drinking water such as boiling, filtering, and adding chlorine to locally available rainwater, lakes, rivers, and wells may replace the need to store large quantities of water.

Boiling water will kill most types of disease-causing organisms and is the most reliable method of purifying water easily. Bring the water to a rolling boil for two minutes. Add one minute for each 5,000 feet of elevation.

The addition of chlorine bleach to water is also a viable alternative. For clear water, add 8 drops per gallon (3.8 liters) and let stand for at least 15 minutes. If the water is cloudy, add twice as much bleach. Bleach used for water purification should be unscented and have a concentration of sodium hypochlorite of at least 4%.

What Can You Do on a Daily Basis?

Cover your cough. Wash your hands regularly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds to kill viruses and bacteria or apply a hand sanitizer with a minimum of 60% alcohol content when soap and water are not available (see Pandemic Planning—Personal Hygiene fact sheet for more details). Stay home if you are sick. Get a vaccination against seasonal flu.

Travel

Those living in or traveling to countries with human or animal cases of H5N1 virus should consider the potential risks. Keep informed of the latest medical guidance and practical information and plan accordingly. Consult www.travel.state.gov for the latest tips on international travel.

Sheltering of Missionaries

Missionaries serving in the local areas may require assistance if required to shelter in place for more than several days. Please contact the local mission president for instructions and assistance if requested to provide these services.

References

Information for this fact sheet was taken from the following the U.S. Department of State web site, www.travel.state.gov/travel/tips/health/health_3096.html.

Detailed information about suggested preparations, as well as planning checklists is available from:

- www.pandemicflu.gov.
- www.who.int/en/.
- www.cdc.gov.