

Pandemic Flu – Family Preparedness



Keeping our students and staff safe and healthy is important to Cincinnati Public Schools.

That's why Cincinnati Public Schools is working with the Cincinnati Health Department, the American Red Cross and other community partners to prepare for crisis situations that may arise. **One of those situations is the possibility of a pandemic flu that could make many people sick.**

Health officials around the world are concerned that a new flu virus is forming and could hit soon, causing this pandemic, or global outbreak.

CPS' preparation includes:

- School nurses educating students and staff on ways to prevent spreading germs, such as proper hand washing and the Cover Your Cough campaign.
- Every school having a pandemic preparedness plan.
- The district and Cincinnati Health Department holding several pandemic flu exercises to practice "real-life" situations.
- Schools receiving disaster kits for medical emergencies.
- Meeting with health and safety officials for discussion and practice so district officials are prepared if a pandemic occurs.

What is pandemic flu?

Pandemic flu is a worldwide epidemic from a new flu virus that causes serious illness and, in many cases, death because humans have little or no immunity, or protection, against it.

What's the difference between pandemic flu and the flu people catch every year?

The symptoms are the same — fever, cough, sore throat, headache and muscle aches.

But when a person has pandemic flu, these symptoms are much worse. Pandemic flu can cause serious complications such as pneumonia, and it causes many more deaths than seasonal flu. Pandemic flu seriously affects even healthy adults, while the seasonal flu most often hits the very young, the elderly and people with chronic illnesses such as heart disease.

What will happen during a pandemic?

Schools and businesses may be closed to help prevent the flu's spread. People may be asked to avoid crowded places. Depending on how many people get sick, supplies may be hard to get.

What can families do to be prepared?

Federal health officials suggest that families begin preparing their homes in case a pandemic causes shortages or isolation. For example, one suggestion is to store two weeks of non-perishable food and water (1 gallon of water per person per day, and include infant formula and diapers, if necessary).

A series of checklists for families can be found at Web sites for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

(www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/checklists.html) and the American Red Cross

(www.redcross.org/news/ds/panflu/).

Questions:

Cincinnati Health Department - 357-7208

Cincinnati chapter, American Red Cross - 579-3000

Here are ways families can help fight the spread of influenza.

- Encourage children and adults to wash their hands often, using soap and water, and scrubbing for 20 seconds (about as long as it takes to recite the ABC's.) Use an alcohol-based hand-sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
- Wash hands especially after coughing or sneezing; after using the bathroom or changing a diaper; and before preparing or eating food.
- When coughing or sneezing, cover your mouth and nose with tissue, or cough into the inside of your elbow. Germs can travel more than three feet and live for two hours on surfaces such as tables and doorknobs. A cleaner containing bleach will kill surface germs.
- Avoid sick people, and, if you are sick, stay home and away from others.
- An influenza vaccine is now recommended for all children age 6 months-18 years. Check with your health-care provider or school nurse to arrange for the flu vaccine this fall.