

ESP FOCUS

Public Health Emergencies



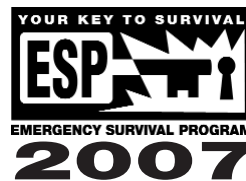
What are Public Health Emergencies?

Public Health Emergencies may be related to incidents or outbreaks of infectious disease (example: pandemic flu, West Nile virus), food and waterborne illnesses (examples: Salmonella, E. coli) and other threats to the public's health and safety. Although the nature of each threat varies greatly, there are steps that you can take to protect yourself.

Pandemic Flu

Pandemic influenza (flu) is a worldwide outbreak of a new flu virus for which there is little or no immunity (protection). Health experts are concerned about the potential for a pandemic flu.

No one can predict when the next pandemic flu will occur or how severe it will be. What is known is that flu pandemics have occurred three times (1918, 1957 and 1968) in the last century. A flu pandemic occurs when a new flu virus emerges. It spreads easily from person-to-person, may cause serious illness, and can sweep across the country and around the world in a very short time. A flu pandemic may come and go in waves, each of which might last for six to eight weeks. If the next flu pandemic to hit the U.S. is severe, life as we know it could be seriously disrupted. To protect yourself and your family, take the time to know the facts and plan ahead to be prepared.



M A Y

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Be Prepared

Follow these steps to prevent the spread of flu and teach your children to do the same.

- Wash your hands often. This will help protect you and others against germs. When soap and water are not available, use alcohol-based disposable hand wash or gel sanitizers.
- When coughing or sneezing, cover your mouth and nose with a tissue. If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your sleeve, not your hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- If you are sick, stay home and away from other people, as much as possible, to protect them from getting sick as well. Get plenty of rest and check with your doctor.

Practice other good health habits.

- Keep healthy: get plenty of sleep, exercise daily, manage stress, drink plenty of fluids, and eat a balanced diet.
- Avoid smoking. Smoking may increase the risk of serious consequences if you get the flu.

Discuss important health issues with your family and loved ones.

- Talk about how/where they would be cared for if you become sick and what would be needed to care for them at home.
- Make a plan for someone to care for children/people with special needs if all adults in the household are sick. Are there other family members or neighbors who can fill in? Make those plans now and discuss with all who need to know.

Food/waterborne Risks

An outbreak of foodborne illness can occur when groups of people eat the same contaminated food and two or more of them come down with the same illness. It may be a group that ate a meal together somewhere, or it may be a group of people who do not know each other at all, but who all happened to buy and eat the same item from a grocery store or restaurant. There are many opportunities for food to become contaminated as it is produced and prepared. To keep food safe, follow these simple steps:

CLEAN: Wash hands and surfaces often

SEPARATE: Don't cross-contaminate!

- Separate raw meat, poultry, seafood, and eggs from other foods in your grocery shopping cart, grocery bags and in your refrigerator.
- Use one cutting board for fresh produce and a separate one for raw meat, poultry, and seafood.
- Never place cooked food on a plate that previously held raw meat, poultry, seafood or eggs.

COOK: Cook to proper temperature

- Cook ground meat, where bacteria can spread during grinding, to at least 160°F.
- Cook eggs until the yolk and white are firm, not runny.
- Cook fish to 145°F or until the flesh is opaque and separates easily with a fork.

CHILL: Refrigerate promptly

- Refrigerate or freeze meat, poultry, eggs, and other perishables as soon as you get them home from the store.
- Keep raw meat, poultry, eggs, cooked food or cut fresh fruits or vegetables in refrigerator or freezer.

Public Emergency Preparedness

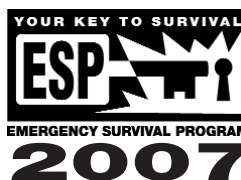
Have two weeks worth of medical and health supplies on hand for you and your family. Examples of supplies are:

- Soap or water free alcohol based handwash
- Medicines for fever such as acetaminophen (Tylenol) or Ibuprofen.
- Cough syrup
- Thermometer
- Fluids with electrolytes such as Pedialyte, Gatorade, or other oral rehydration solutions

Oral rehydration solutions are used for people who have diarrhea, vomiting or fever. These solutions contain water and salts in specific proportions to replenish both fluids and electrolytes. Oral rehydration products are readily available in most drug stores. The secret is to begin giving fluids early in the course of an illness instead of waiting until the situation becomes urgent.

- Prescription drugs: If you or a family member regularly takes prescription drugs, talk to your doctor and insurance plan about having enough medicine on hand to last for several weeks.

To prevent the spread of flu, there are several key steps that you can take now to stay healthier: wash your hands with soap and water frequently, cover your cough and sneezes, stay home if you are sick and stay away from others so they will not become sick, and get a seasonal flu shot.



This Focus Sheet is produced as part of the Emergency Survival Program (ESP). ESP is an awareness campaign designed to increase home, neighborhood, business and school emergency preparedness. ESP was developed by the County of Los Angeles. The California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (OES) and representatives from Contra Costa, Imperial, Inyo, Kern, Los Angeles, Marin, Mono, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, Santa Cruz, and Ventura counties; Southern California Edison; the Southern California Earthquake Center and the American Red Cross assisted in the development of campaign materials and coordination of the campaign.