

# PANDEMIC AND SEASONAL FLU

The flu is caused by a virus that spreads among people. The flu can cause mild to severe illness or even death. Symptoms of the flu may include fever, chills, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, muscle or body aches, headaches, and fatigue.

## WHAT IS SEASONAL FLU?

Each year, different strains (types) of flu virus spread among people. This is known as seasonal flu. In the United States, flu season typically lasts from **October** through **May**.

## WHAT IS PANDEMIC FLU?

When a new strain (type) of flu appears and people have little or no immunity, it can easily spread and cause a global outbreak. This is known as a pandemic flu (for example, the 2009 H1N1 swine flu).

Flu pandemics are rare, but can have severe consequences such as high rates of worker absenteeism, a crowded health care system, and disease and death among residents.

## IS THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH PREPARED?

**Yes!** The Department of Health Office of Preparedness and Response prepares in a variety of ways:

- Maryland Influenza Plan and Pandemic Influenza Plan
- Pandemic influenza exercises for emergency personnel
- Partnering with local, state, federal, and private agencies to prepare for, prevent, and lessen the impact of a flu pandemic
- Maintaining a stockpile of antiviral medications and medical supplies

## HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF/YOUR FAMILY

- **Get your flu vaccine.** It's the best protection against the flu! Everyone 6 months and older should get their vaccine in September or October.
- **Follow basic personal hygiene.** Wash your hands often with soap and water for 20 seconds. If soap is not available, use alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- **Cover your nose and mouth** with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Avoid touching eyes, nose, and mouth.
- **Avoid close contact**, such as kissing or sharing utensils or cups with sick people.
- **If you are sick, stay home** to avoid the spread of illness.

## MORE INFORMATION

 [preparedness.health.maryland.gov](http://preparedness.health.maryland.gov)

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