

## When the Pandemic Happens

Your home is the safest place. As soon as the first confirmed case is announced in our region, begin "social distancing":

- Avoid inside public areas, like restaurants
- Avoid anyone coughing or sneezing;
- Stand more than 3 feet away from the person you must talk with
- Avoid physical contact with others
- Consider wearing a mask if you must go out in public to shop or bank or visit a doctor;
- Avoid social gatherings, like sporting events

If you get sick, stay at home until you are well.

When you recover from the flu, you can work, even with flu victims, without yourself getting the flu again.

Remember: Practice frequent handwashing and use an alcohol-based gel hand disinfectant when water is not immediately available.



**"Be sure to get a yearly flu shot"**

## Communication with the Public During a Pandemic flu

In Rockbridge county, public service announcements (PSA) from the Virginia Department of Health, emergency managers, schools, hospitals, and public officials will be broadcast on WREL 1450 AM and on WWVZ 96.7FM.

The Rockbridge Office of Emergency Management number is (463-4361)

The City of Lexington Emergency Management phone number is (462-3700).

The City of Buena Vista Emergency Management number is (261-6174).

### Resources on the Internet

Health and Human Services:  
[www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov)  
[www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov)

Center for Disease Control: [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

Virginia Department of Health:  
[www.vdh.state.va.us/PandemicFlu/index.asp](http://www.vdh.state.va.us/PandemicFlu/index.asp)

CIDRAP: Univ. of Minnesota infectious disease news: [www.cidrap.umn.edu/](http://www.cidrap.umn.edu/)

OSHA:  
[www.osha.gov](http://www.osha.gov)

## Planning for the Pandemic

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### What is Pandemic Influenza?

Influenza, or flu, is a viral infection of the lungs. There are two main types of flu virus, A and B. Each type includes many different strains and new strains emerge periodically. Flu outbreaks occur most often in late fall and winter.

Pandemic flu is a global outbreak of disease that occurs when a new influenza A virus appears in humans, causes serious illness and then spreads easily from person to person worldwide.



### What is the difference between a pandemic and a seasonal outbreak of flu?

A pandemic is caused by a new influenza A virus that most people have never been exposed to, making everyone susceptible. Pandemic strains also often cause more serious disease. Because of this, past flu pandemics have led to high levels of illness, death, social disruption and economic loss.

Seasonal outbreaks of flu are caused by strains of flu virus similar to those of past years. Some people may have built up immunity, and there is also a vaccine for each year's flu season.

## Planning for the Pandemic



*This information is provided as a public service by the Rockbridge Area Pandemic Planning Task Force*

## What to expect if an outbreak occurs

No one knows how bad the next flu pandemic will be, but everyone should be prepared for the worst.

- It may be difficult to get medical care. Large numbers of sick people may overwhelm hospitals and clinics. Doctors and nurses will get sick, too, so hospitals and clinics may be short-staffed.
- Supplies and services will be limited. Many people will be unable to work, affecting how long businesses, banks, government offices and other services are open.
- You may be asked to stay away from others. Staying home will help stop the spread of the virus. Events may be canceled, and theaters and schools closed. If necessary, health officials will issue orders to keep people who have the virus separated from others.
- It will take months to develop a vaccine against the new virus, so flu shots will not be immediately available.
- Medicines for flu symptoms may be in short supply.
- Travel may be difficult. Routes and schedules for buses, trains or planes may change or be restricted. Gasoline may also be in short supply.
- You may be asked to wear a mask. Masks may be required in hospitals, clinics or doctors' offices, as well as other places that are open to the public.

A flu pandemic could last a long time. The 1918 flu pandemic lasted 18 months. In some cases, pandemics weaken for a while and then recur.

Health officials will keep you informed. They will work with the media to provide timely information and advice. Web sites from government health agencies will also have updated information.

## In your community

Know your neighbors. Talk with family, friends and neighbors to make sure everyone is prepared. Be ready to help neighbors who are elderly or have special needs if services they depend on are not available.

Know school policies. Know policies about illnesses and being absent. Be prepared for school closures.

Make a plan for taking care of your children if schools are not open for long periods.

### At work



You may not be able to go to work. Staying home from work when you are sick is the most important thing you can do to protect others.

Encourage planning. Every business, organization and agency should have a plan for making sure essential work can get done if large numbers of employees are absent. You may be asked to perform duties that are not typically part of your job.

Explore other ways to get your work done. When people are ill, find ways to reduce personal contact such as increased use of e-mails or phone conferences.

OSHA guidelines recommend the use of a surgical mask at work during a pandemic for workers that deal closely with the public and cannot be physically shielded from cough and sneeze secretions.

### At home



Teach your children about covering their cough/sneeze, about frequent handwashing, and about not touching their faces. Have alcohol-based gel hand disinfectant on hand if water is not immediately available.

Store extra food, toiletries, pet food, etc. so you have the option of avoiding shopping frequently during the pandemic.

Have on hand a medical thermometer, 50, surgical and N95 masks, acetaminophen (Tylenol) per family member, and a supply of regular prescription medicines. Get these flu-related items now as they may be in short supply during a pandemic.

Have ample winter clothing, a flashlight, emergency water, and a plan for electric outage in winter.

## Masks: Be Prepared Now

People infected with influenza can spread the virus in droplets when they cough, sneeze, or talk. Wearing respiratory protection may prevent you from inhaling influenza viruses and becoming ill— it could also protect the people around you if you are infectious.

### Masks/Respirators:

Two basic kinds of respiratory protection that may be used during an influenza pandemic are respirators (e.g. N-95 masks) and “surgical masks”. Air-purifying respirators fit tightly to the face so that most air is inhaled through the filter material. They can protect against breathing in very small particles which might contain viruses. Respirators should be used by a caregiver when taking care of a person with pandemic influenza.

Surgical masks help stop larger droplets from being spread by the person wearing the mask. They also protect the person wearing the mask against splashes or sprays that might contain influenza virus from reaching the mouth and nose. Therefore, surgical masks may be used by an infected person to decrease the spread of the virus to others. Masks may also be used by a caregiver for protection if a respirator is not available. Wearing a mask may be considered if you cannot avoid being in a crowded setting.

Both masks and respirators are available in stores and on the Internet. Surgical masks cost about a nickel each; N-95 respirators cost about a dollar each. However, masks and respirators are only designed to be used once and then thrown away. Therefore, people may need to have a supply of masks and/or respirators available to last through the pandemic. Remember: masks and respirators may be hard to get (or more expensive) during an influenza pandemic; consider buying ahead of time.

Additional information on masks and respirators is available at:

[www.pandemicflu.gov/vaccine/masks.html](http://www.pandemicflu.gov/vaccine/masks.html)

[www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/community/maskguidancecommunity.html](http://www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/community/maskguidancecommunity.html)