

H1N1 (Swine) Flu: Prepare, Don't Panic

The Boy Scout motto "Be prepared" is a good one to follow when any emergency looms. It's smart to take steps to be ready in case a serious flu pandemic occurs. If we all stay calm and do our part, we can minimize the effects of a widespread outbreak.

1. Plan

At home, make a family health information sheet. This is a good thing to have on hand in case of any type of emergency. List each person in your family and include:

- Any allergies
- Their current medical conditions
- Any medications they take and the dosages
- The name and phone number of any doctors that they see

At school, discuss how learning could continue if schools close.

- Ask teachers for lesson plans or activities children can do at home or Web sites they can access.
- Have on hand books, school supplies and educational games or movies.

2. Prepare

Stock up on food, water and other supplies you might need if you were unable to get to a store or deliveries were disrupted. These are the same things that you should have on hand in case of any natural disaster, such as a hurricane or an earthquake. Store enough non-perishable food, water and other supplies for two weeks. For example:

- Canned soups, meats, beans, fish, fruits and vegetables
- Foods that don't need to be cooked, such as protein bars, cereals, peanut butter, crackers and dried fruit
- Baby food and pet food if needed
- Plastic jugs of water (1 gallon per person per day)
- Paper products such as tissues, toilet paper, paper towels and disposable diapers
- Garbage bags
- Flashlights, batteries

Keep supplies on hand that you may need in case of illness, such as:

- Prescription medicines and medical supplies
- Soap and alcohol-based hand wash
- Nonprescription medicines for fever, such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen
- Anti-diarrhea medications
- Sports drinks or other fluids with electrolytes

Stay well-informed about the latest flu developments. Having good information is one of the best ways to be prepared. Some of the best sources are:

- The U.S. government site www.pandemicflu.gov.
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Hotline, 800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636). Information is available in English and Spanish, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
- Your state and local government Web sites.

3. Prevent

Make the following steps habits. They can help prevent the spread of the flu and other respiratory illnesses:

- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue (or sleeve) when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash.
- Wash your hands often, especially after you cough or sneeze. If you can't use soap and water, use an alcohol-based hand cleaner.
- Keep your hands away from your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick. Try to stay six feet or more away.
- Stay home if you're sick.