

# Pandemic Influenza

## An Overview for the General Public



Advancing Health  
Through the Generations

Presentation provided by the  
*Iowa Department of Public Health*

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# Background

- **What is the difference between a Pandemic and an Epidemic?**
  - **Pandemic:** *pan* means “all” and *demos* means “people”. So a pandemic is a disease outbreak that has spread around the world to many people.
  - **Epidemic:** *epi* means “upon” and *demos* means “people”. So an epidemic is when more people in a certain area or region become ill creating more cases than normal in that area and at that time.

# Background

- **Influenza is a virus**
  - Antibiotics are not used to treat viruses
- **There are many different types of influenza viruses**
  - A, B and C are the types of influenza
  - All can infect people, but C types rarely do
- **Influenza viruses change slightly each year**
  - This is one reason why everyone should get a new flu shot every year

# Background

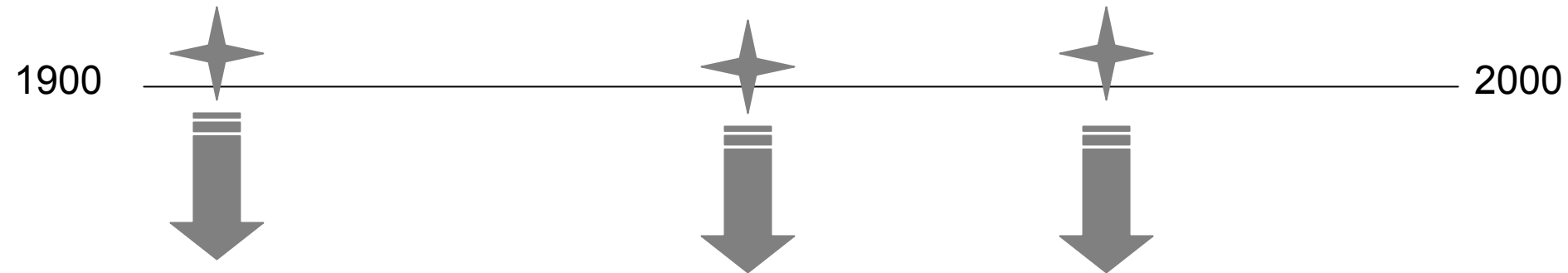
- Influenza (flu) viruses can make both people and animals sick.
- Seasonal flu happens every October through May.
  - 1,000 Iowans die every year from seasonal influenza and its complications like pneumonia.

# Flu Pandemics in the last 100 Years

1918-1919

1957-1958

1968-1969



- This was known as the “Spanish Flu”, it happened during WWI and caused about 500,000 U.S. deaths.

- This was known as the “Asian Flu”, and it caused about 80,000 U.S. deaths.

- This was known as the “Hong Kong” and caused about 30,000 U.S. deaths.

# Avian Influenza or “Bird Flu”

- Bird flu usually only infects birds
- The bird flu currently in Asia has caused illness and death in birds
- The current bird flu has caused illness in about 100 people
  - Almost every person who got ill had touched a bird sick with bird flu
- **The current strain of bird flu is not causing a pandemic of flu**

# Where is Bird Flu Right Now?

- All the people who have gotten ill live in Asia.
- Bird flu has been identified in birds in Asia, Europe, the Middle East and Africa.

# Will the Current Bird Flu Cause a Pandemic?

Possibly. Strains of bird flu have caused pandemics in the past. However, it is not likely that a pandemic will happen soon. The current strain of bird flu must change to be able to spread person to person before it can become a pandemic.

# Will the Current Bird Flu Cause a Pandemic? (Continued...)

Three things must happen before any strain of flu can cause a pandemic:

- 1) The flu must spread easily from person to person.
- 2) It must make a person sick.
- 3) It must be a type of flu no one has ever had before.

# What is the Iowa Department of Public Health Doing to Prepare for a Pandemic?

Health officials are watching the current bird flu very carefully. The following slides will outline all of the things IDPH is doing to prepare for a pandemic.

# Planning

- **The Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) has a Biological Emergency Response Plan**
  - The plan describes how health officials in Iowa should react in a biological emergency such as pandemic flu.
  - Every county in Iowa also has a plan.
  - The state of Iowa has practiced this plan several times.
  - The plan covers how to provide medicine or vaccine to every Iowan in 3-5 days.

# Watching for Seasonal Flu...

- IDPH tracks how the regular or “seasonal” flu affects Iowans using a network of physicians, schools, child care centers and long term care facilities that track flu-like sickness in their locations. Flu network participants are located in every region of Iowa.
- IDPH also reviews death certificates to see if flu is causing more deaths than expected in Iowa.

# Watching for Seasonal Flu...

- The state watches the types of flu that people have and looks for unusual types that might not be covered by the vaccine.
- State health officials watch what happens in other states to see how Iowa might be affected.

# Helping Iowa Hospitals Prepare

- IDPH keeps track of the different services each hospital in Iowa offers and can help people find those services when they are needed in an emergency.
- IDPH has many ways to talk to hospitals during a pandemic to find out how they are doing.
- IDPH has staff dedicated to helping hospitals prepare for pandemic flu.

# How will Iowa be affected by a Pandemic of Influenza?

- 15-35% of the population may be affected.
  - 450,000 to 1 million people in Iowa could become sick
  - 900-2,000 might die from pandemic influenza
- But not everyone would become sick at the same time.
- Waves of pandemic flu might happen several times over 2-3 years.

# Will Iowa Stockpile Medicine for Pandemic Flu?

- Federal and State government officials are looking at whether it would be helpful to stockpile medicine and how much should be stockpiled.
- There are medicines that may be used to treat flu, but it is not known which would be most useful during a pandemic.

# Should Iowans Stockpile Flu Medicines like Tamiflu in their Homes?

- No. Iowans should not try to stockpile any flu medication for several reasons:
  - First, it is impossible to know when a person should take the medicine.
  - Second, no one knows what medications will be most helpful during a pandemic.
  - Third, these medications could go bad in a medicine cabinet.

# Will a Vaccine be Available During a Pandemic?

- Vaccine will probably not be immediately available when a pandemic starts. Usually, it takes 6-9 months to make a vaccine and so it would take about that long after a pandemic starts for a vaccine to be ready.
- Getting the flu vaccine every year lowers the risk for getting the flu.

# What can Iowans do to Prepare for Pandemic Influenza?

Iowans can prepare for a pandemic like they would for any emergency.

- ✓ **Prepare an emergency kit.**

For more information, visit the Protect Iowa Health website at [www.protectiowahealth.org](http://www.protectiowahealth.org).

- ✓ **Get your flu shot every year.**

- ✓ **Get the facts.**

Seek out information to read on pandemic often and from sources with good information. Local, state and federal health departments are usually good places to get information.

# The Future...

- State health officials will continue to watch where the bird flu is in the world and if people are getting ill.
- IDPH will continue to listen to the information coming from experts at the World Health Organization and the Centers for Disease Control.
- IDPH will continue to work on additional plans and practicing these plans to be as ready as possible.

# Resources

- **Protect Iowa Health campaign**

[www.protectiowahealth.org](http://www.protectiowahealth.org)

- **IDPH Influenza website**

[www.idph.state.ia.us/adper/flu.asp](http://www.idph.state.ia.us/adper/flu.asp)

- **CDC avian/pandemic website**

[www.cdc.gov/flu/pandemic](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/pandemic)

- **WHO avian/pandemic website**

[www.who.int/csr/disease/avian\\_influenza/en/index.html](http://www.who.int/csr/disease/avian_influenza/en/index.html)

