Stay Healthy

These steps may help prevent the spread of respiratory illnesses such as the flu:

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze—throw the tissue away immediately after you use it.

- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. If you are not near water, use an alcohol-based (60-95%) hand cleaner.

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick. When you are sick, keep your distance from others to protect them from getting sick too.

- If you get the flu, stay home from work, school, and social gatherings. In this way you will help prevent others from catching your illness.

- Try not to touch your eyes, nose, or mouth. Germs often spread this way.

Vaccination

Vaccines are used to protect people from contracting a virus once a particular threat is identified. After an individual has been infected by a virus, a vaccine generally cannot help to combat it. Because viruses change over time, a specific pandemic influenza vaccine cannot be produced until a pandemic influenza virus emerges and is identified. Once a pandemic influenza virus has been identified, it will likely take 4-6 months to develop, test, and begin producing a vaccine.

While there is currently no human pandemic influenza in the world, the federal government is facilitating production of vaccines for several existing avian influenza viruses. These vaccines may provide some protection should one of these viruses
change and cause an influenza pandemic. The supply of pandemic vaccine will be limited, particularly in the early stages of a pandemic. Efforts are being made to increase vaccine-manufacturing capacity in the United States so that supplies of vaccines would be more readily available. In addition, research is underway to develop new ways to produce vaccines more quickly.

**Antivirals**

A number of antiviral drugs are approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to treat and prevent seasonal influenza. Some of these antiviral medications may be effective in treating pandemic influenza. These drugs may help prevent infection in people at risk and shorten the duration of symptoms in those infected with pandemic influenza. However, it is unlikely that antiviral medications alone would effectively contain the spread of pandemic influenza. The federal government is stockpiling antiviral medications that would most likely be used in the early stages of an influenza pandemic and working to develop new antiviral medications. These drugs are available by prescription only.

**Stay Informed**

- Knowing the facts is the best preparation. Identify sources you can count on for reliable information. If a pandemic occurs, having accurate and reliable information will be critical.
- Reliable, accurate, and timely information is available at [www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov).
- Another source for information on pandemic influenza is the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Hotline at: 1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636). This line is available in English and Spanish, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- Look for information on your local and state government Web sites. Links are available to each state department of public health at [http://www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/tab2.html#stateinfo](http://www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/tab2.html#stateinfo).
- Listen to local and national radio, watch news reports on television, and read your newspaper and other sources of printed and web-based information.
- Talk to your local health care providers and public health officials.