

# 2008 Ontario Health Plan for an Influenza Pandemic

# About Influenza

- Influenza is a contagious respiratory illness caused by a group of viruses: influenza A, influenza B, and influenza C (type C rarely affects human health)
- Common symptoms of influenza include fever, headache, aches and pains, fatigue and weakness, stuffy nose, sneezing, sore throat, cough, and nausea, vomiting, and diarrhoea (in children)
- Seasonal influenza (flu) is caused by influenza A and B viruses
  - Outbreaks follow predictable seasonal patterns and occur annually, usually in winter, in temperate climates.
  - Results in mild to severe illness, with deaths often caused by complications (such as pneumonia)
- An influenza pandemic is a global disease outbreak of the influenza A virus
  - Occurs rarely (three times in 20th century - last in 1968)
  - Spreads easily and rapidly through many countries and affects a large percentage of the population
  - Symptoms may be more severe and complications more frequent
- Influenza pandemics arise when all four of the following occur:
  - A novel influenza A virus emerges
  - The new virus can spread efficiently from human to human
  - The new virus causes serious illness and death
  - The population has little or no immunity to the new virus

# Why Plan for an Influenza Pandemic?

## Global Context

- Although no one can predict when the next pandemic will occur, public health experts/ organizations - including the World Health Organization - have warned that an influenza pandemic is overdue
- Asia, Africa, and Europe are currently dealing with outbreaks of highly pathogenic H5N1 virus in domestic poultry and wild birds
  - H5N1 has raised concerns about a potential human pandemic due to fear that potential mutations that could result in sustained human-to-human transmission

## Ontario Context

- Ontario will have little lead time between when a pandemic is first declared in the world and its spread to Ontario
- During pandemic, the health system will be overwhelmed and there will be societal disruptions
- Appropriate pandemic planning can reduce:
  - The number of people infected
  - The amount of illness and number of deaths
  - The amount of socio-economic disruption
- Every jurisdiction must be prepared to mobilize resources quickly and effectively to limit the impact of an influenza pandemic

# Ontario Health Plan for an Influenza Pandemic

- To support the health system prepare for a pandemic, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care has led the development of the Ontario Health Plan for an Influenza Pandemic (OHPIP)
  - Plan is updated annually with input from experts representing all three levels of government; public health, infectious diseases, and infection control experts; clinicians; and labour unions, professional associations, and healthcare sector regulatory bodies
  - 2008 version of the OHPIP is the fifth iteration of the plan
- The goals of the OHPIP are:
  - To minimize serious illness and overall deaths through appropriate management of Ontario's health care system
  - To minimize societal disruption in Ontario as a result of an influenza pandemic
- The OHPIP is based on a four-pronged strategic approach:
  - Be ready – Plan at provincial and local levels in advance of a pandemic
  - Be watchful – Active screening and monitoring to identify the earliest signs of an influenza pandemic
  - Be decisive – Manage the spread quickly and effectively
  - Be transparent – Communicate with Ontarians

# Plan Overview: Key Features

- Aligns with strategies/ plans from the international and national levels
  - Adheres to World Health Organization pandemic phases (inter-pandemic phase, pandemic alert phase, and pandemic phase)
  - Follows planning assumptions and direction in the Canadian Pandemic Influenza Plan
- Emphasizes the importance of occupational health and safety and infection prevention and control in health settings
  - Provides guidance on the use of personal protective equipment
- Details federal, provincial, and local roles and responsibilities
- Includes an ethical framework for decision-making
- Focuses on enhancing health system readiness, including guidance on stockpiling supplies and equipment
- Guides the community response and includes a number tools designed to support effective local planning and preparedness
- Continues to be updated and improved with emerging clinical, epidemiological, and operational information

# Plan Overview: Key 2008 Enhancements

- New details on surveillance and reporting systems to monitor a pandemic
- Updated information on occupational health and safety and infection prevention and control measures
- Revised guidance to support the implementation of mass immunization clinics
- More details on the organization and delivery of influenza-related primary care services, including updated information on early assessment, treatment and referral strategies
- Updates to planning guidelines for laboratories, paediatric services, and long-term care homes
- Planning guidelines for the provision of chronic kidney disease/ acute kidney injury services
- Guidance to assist hospitals in planning for potential blood shortages
- Outline of a chapter on psychosocial supports to guide planners in implementing psychological assistance programs for health workers and the public/ patients they serve

# Plan Overview: Structure

The 2008 OHPIP is organized into three parts:

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***Part I: The Context for Planning for an Influenza Pandemic***

- Provides basic information about influenza and summarizes the impact that an influenza pandemic would have in Ontario
- Presents an overview of goals, objectives, and strategic approach of the OHPIP

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***Part II: System-Wide Issues, Activities, and Tools***

- Outlines activities and strategies common to all health settings, such as surveillance activities, public health measures, occupational health and safety and infection prevention and control guidelines, health human resources planning, supplies and equipment, and communications
- Describes community-level strategies to assess, treat, and provide referrals for patients with influenza-like illness

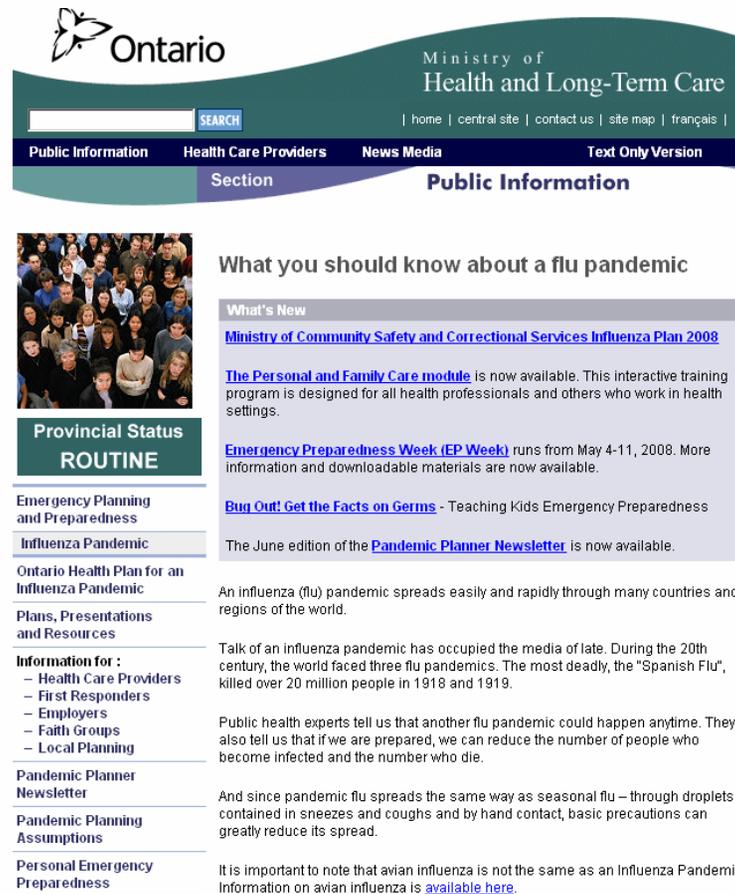
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***Part III: Setting-Specific Issues, Activities, and Tools***

- Outlines activities and strategies for specific health settings, including public health, laboratory services, emergency medical services, community health care, acute care, paediatric services, and long-term care homes

# Additional Resources for Health Workers

The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care's influenza pandemic website at [www.health.gov.on.ca/pandemic](http://www.health.gov.on.ca/pandemic) contains a variety of resources and information on pandemic planning.



The screenshot shows the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care website. The header includes the Ontario logo and the text "Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care". Below the header is a search bar and navigation links for "home", "central site", "contact us", "site map", and "français". A dark blue navigation bar contains "Public Information", "Health Care Providers", "News Media", and "Text Only Version". The "Public Information" section is active, showing a "Section" dropdown menu.

**What you should know about a flu pandemic**

**What's New**

- [Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services Influenza Plan 2008](#)
- [The Personal and Family Care module](#) is now available. This interactive training program is designed for all health professionals and others who work in health settings.
- [Emergency Preparedness Week \(EP Week\)](#) runs from May 4-11, 2008. More information and downloadable materials are now available.
- [Bug Out! Get the Facts on Germs](#) - Teaching Kids Emergency Preparedness
- The June edition of the [Pandemic Planner Newsletter](#) is now available.

An influenza (flu) pandemic spreads easily and rapidly through many countries and regions of the world.

Talk of an influenza pandemic has occupied the media of late. During the 20th century, the world faced three flu pandemics. The most deadly, the "Spanish Flu", killed over 20 million people in 1918 and 1919.

Public health experts tell us that another flu pandemic could happen anytime. They also tell us that if we are prepared, we can reduce the number of people who become infected and the number who die.

And since pandemic flu spreads the same way as seasonal flu – through droplets contained in sneezes and coughs and by hand contact, basic precautions can greatly reduce its spread.

It is important to note that avian influenza is not the same as an Influenza Pandemic. Information on avian influenza is [available here](#).

**Provincial Status**  
**ROUTINE**

**Emergency Planning and Preparedness**

**Influenza Pandemic**

**Ontario Health Plan for an Influenza Pandemic**

**Plans, Presentations and Resources**

**Information for :**

- Health Care Providers
- First Responders
- Employers
- Faith Groups
- Local Planning

**Pandemic Planner Newsletter**

**Pandemic Planning Assumptions**

**Personal Emergency Preparedness**



# Additional Resources for Health Workers (cont'd)

The ministry circulates the Pandemic Planner, a monthly newsletter for health care workers, to provide information and updates on pandemic planning and related activities at the federal, provincial, and local levels. The newsletter is distributed and accessible on the ministry's influenza pandemic website.

**The Pandemic Planner**  
A Monthly Newsletter for Health Professionals  
Emergency Management Unit, Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care  
For those of us in the field of emergency management, we plan for fire, flood, and other natural disasters, or on plan influenza pandemics – our efforts are to prepare and protect it.

**The Pandemic Planner**  
A Monthly Newsletter for Health Professionals  
Emergency Management Unit, Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care  
For those of us who are a part of Ontario's health system, former Chief Medical Officer of Health and Assistant Deputy Health Officer for the province, we have a lot to learn from you. As we plan and collaborate across the country to have our health system ready for the time and the opportunity to have our health system, health workers and the public safe.

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# Additional Resources for Health Workers (cont'd)

The ministry recently released the [OHPIP Personal and Family Care module](#), an interactive e-training program created to educate health professionals/ staff in health settings on how to take care of themselves and their family during an influenza pandemic. Visit the ministry's influenza pandemic website at [www.health.gov.on.ca/pandemic](http://www.health.gov.on.ca/pandemic) to access this resource.

The screenshot displays the user interface for the 'Personal and Family Care' module. At the top left is the Ontario logo. The top right features the text 'Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care' and a group photo of diverse people. The main title is 'Overview of the Curriculum on Personal and Family Care'. A left-hand navigation menu includes 'Guiding Principles', 'Objectives', and 'Expectations and Instructions'. The central 'Main Menu' section explains that the module is divided into seven parts and lists them: Part One (Overview), Part Two (Setting the Context), Part Three (Infection Prevention and Control), Part Four (Vaccine and Antivirals), Part Five (Preparedness Starts With You), Part Six (Where to get More Information), and Part Seven (References). Below this list is an 'Evaluation Form' link. At the bottom right, there are 'BACK' and 'NEXT' navigation buttons. The background of the interface features a close-up image of a person's face blowing a nose into a tissue.

Ontario

Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care

Overview of the Curriculum on **Personal and Family Care**

**Guiding Principles**

**Objectives**

**Expectations and Instructions**

**Main Menu**

This module is divided into seven stand-alone parts. Simply click on the part you would like to learn more about:

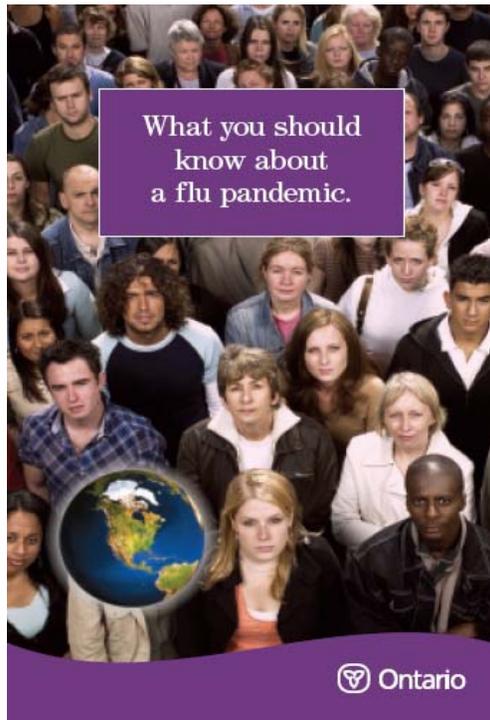
- **Part One** – Overview
- **Part Two** – Setting the Context
- **Part Three** – Infection Prevention and Control
- **Part Four** – Vaccine and Antivirals
- **Part Five** – Preparedness Starts With You
- **Part Six** – Where to get More Information
- **Part Seven** – References

• **Evaluation Form**

BACK NEXT

# Resources for the General Public

The ministry has developed a brochure entitled What You Should Know About an Influenza Pandemic and a series of Pandemic Fact Sheets for the General Public in order to educate Ontarians about pandemic influenza. All these materials are available online at [www.health.gov.on.ca/pandemic](http://www.health.gov.on.ca/pandemic).



## Limiting the Spread: Travel, Social Contact and Pandemic Flu

This fact sheet provides travellers with guidance.

### Travel Guidelines During An Influenza Pandemic

During an influenza pandemic social distancing measures may be implemented to limit the spread of the disease. Depending on the severity of the pandemic, international, domestic and even local public transport and travel may be restricted, suspended or modified.

If you are sick, stay home and keep away from other people as much as possible.

If long-distance domestic or international travel is permitted and you are feeling well and you must travel, observe the following recommendations to limit your chances of getting sick:

#### What Should I Do Before I Travel?

- Get the most current available seasonal flu vaccine to avoid being infected with circulating flu viruses.
- Make sure your immunizations for the country you are visiting are up-to-date.
- Purchase supplementary insurance when travelling outside of Canada as many emergency health services provided outside the country cost much more than your One Health Insurance Plan may pay. You should also consider the possibility of medical evacuation coverage.
- Educate yourself and others who may be travelling with you about the risk of influenza as soon as you plan to visit. Check the Department of Foreign and International Trade Canada website at [www.cic.gc.ca](http://www.cic.gc.ca)

When infected persons cough or sneeze they emit tiny droplets or small particles that can be inhaled or come into contact with the mouth, nose, and eyes of others. Hand-to-hand contact with an infected person or handling objects contaminated by the infected person and then touching your mouth, eyes, or nose can also lead to infection.

People with flu are infectious and able to transmit the virus for up to 24 hours before symptoms appear. Adults are infectious for three to five days after symptoms appear while children are infectious for up to seven days after symptoms appear. (Note: the period of infectiousness is based on how seasonal influenza is transmitted and may change in a pandemic.)

#### How to Keep from Getting Sick

Take the following steps to stay healthy during a flu pandemic:

## Staying Healthy During a Flu Pandemic

This fact sheet provides precautions for reducing it.

### How Flu Is Spread

The flu, or influenza, is a highly infectious respiratory disease caused by a virus that infects the nose, the throat, and lungs. Pandemic flu occurs when a new subtype of flu virus, for which people have not built up any immunity, appears or emerges in the population and quickly infects large numbers of people throughout the world.

The flu spreads easily from person to person through coughing and sneezing and from touching your eyes, mouth, or nose. However, the ability of the influenza virus to be transmitted through the air cannot be entirely ruled out.

It is difficult to predict when the next pandemic influenza (flu) will occur or how severe it will be, so it is important to be prepared. The first step in individual and family planning for a flu pandemic is to be informed. Visit the [Linkages section of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care website](http://www.health.gov.on.ca) to find out what you should know about a flu pandemic: what it is, how it differs from the seasonal flu, the symptoms, possible treatments, as well as what the Government of Ontario is doing to plan for a pandemic.

### How Prepared Are You?

Depending on the severity of the pandemic, many aspects of everyday life could be disrupted. These disruptions could include everything from school and business closings to the interruption of basic services such as public transportation and health care. An especially severe influenza pandemic could lead to high levels of illness, death, social disruption, and economic loss. Follow are a series of questions that you should consider in your pandemic flu planning.

#### Work

- Does my employer have a pandemic business plan?

## Preparing for a Flu Pandemic: Making Individual and Family Plans

This fact sheet provides guidelines to help you and your family plan ahead.

### How Will Ontario Be Affected?

The population will have the flu severe enough to take at least a half day off work.

- About half of those who get sick will only need health information to care for themselves, and will not require formal medical care. The remaining people who get sick will need some form of medical care.
- More severe illness and a higher number of deaths than the usual seasonal flu is likely in all population groups.
- People with flu are infectious and able to transmit the virus for up to 24 hours before symptoms appear. Adults are infectious for three to five days after symptoms appear while children are infectious for up to seven days after symptoms appear. (Note: the period of infectiousness is based on how seasonal influenza is transmitted and may change in a pandemic.)

### What Is the Ontario Ministry of Health Doing to Prepare For A Pandemic?

Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health and the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MHLTC) are working with local public health units, primary care providers, hospitals, long-term care homes, and home care providers to prepare for a flu pandemic.

Developed by the MHLTC, the Ontario Health Plan for an Influenza Pandemic outlines the steps that Ontario can take to prepare for a flu pandemic before it arrives, and to respond to the pandemic once it is here.

## Preparing for a Flu Pandemic: How Will Ontario Be Affected?

This fact sheet provides information on the anticipated impact of a flu pandemic in Ontario, and what the province is doing to protect Ontarians.

### How Will We Know That A Flu Pandemic Is Coming?

Since the majority of new flu strains emerge in Southeast Asia, it is very unlikely that a flu pandemic will begin in North America. The World Health Organization and public health experts around the world, including here in Canada and Ontario, are watching carefully to rapidly identify new flu strains that could cause a pandemic. However, because viruses travel in much more common fashions in previous pandemics, experts believe that a flu pandemic will occur in Ontario or how severe it will be, experts agree on the following information:

### Important Ontario Flu Pandemic Facts

Although no one knows when a pandemic will occur in Ontario or how severe it will be, experts agree on the following information:

- Pandemics can occur anytime during the year.
- Once a flu pandemic arrives, such waves could last for eight weeks in a single community.
- A pandemic will likely occur in two or even more waves lasting approximately eight weeks, with the second wave of illness occurring within three to nine months after the first.
- A flu pandemic may make people sick in different parts of the province at different times and more people might get sick in one city than in another.
- According to current estimates, over the duration of the pandemic, about 35 per cent of

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# Pandemic Planning in Other Sectors

A number of plans that have been developed to support pandemic readiness for other non-health sectors in Ontario:

<b><i>Provincial Coordination Plan for an Influenza Pandemic</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Released by Emergency Management Ontario in 2006</li><li>– Outlines roles and responsibilities of provincial ministries, including requirements to support the MOHLTC's response</li></ul>
<b><i>Influenza Pandemic Planning Guidelines for Municipalities</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Released by Emergency Management Ontario in 2006</li><li>– Supports municipalities develop pandemic response plans for critical infrastructure sectors</li></ul>
<b><i>Pandemic Planning Guide for the Ontario Public Service</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Released by the Ministry of Government Services in 2008</li><li>– Outlines pandemic preparedness roles and responsibilities within the Ontario Public Service</li></ul>
<b><i>Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services Influenza Plan</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Released by the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services (MCSCS) in 2008</li><li>– Outlines the processes and strategies required to fulfill the roles and responsibilities assigned to MCSCS in the Provincial Coordination Plan for an Influenza Pandemic, as well as to ensure continuity of ministry critical services</li></ul>

# Key Websites

- Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care

2008 OHPIP: [www.health.gov.on.ca/english/providers/program/emu/pan\\_flu/pan\\_flu\\_plan.html](http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/providers/program/emu/pan_flu/pan_flu_plan.html)

Pandemic influenza: [www.health.gov.on.ca/pandemic](http://www.health.gov.on.ca/pandemic)

Avian influenza: [www.health.gov.on.ca/avian](http://www.health.gov.on.ca/avian)

Emergency planning and preparedness: [www.health.gov.on.ca/emergency](http://www.health.gov.on.ca/emergency)

- Public Health Agency of Canada

Canadian Pandemic Influenza Plan: [www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/influenza/pandemicplan\\_e.html](http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/influenza/pandemicplan_e.html)

Influenza: [www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/influenza/index.html](http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/influenza/index.html)

- Government of Canada

Pandemic influenza: [www.pandemicinfluenza.gc.ca](http://www.pandemicinfluenza.gc.ca)

- World Health Organization

Influenza: [www.who.int/csr/disease/influenza/en/](http://www.who.int/csr/disease/influenza/en/)

# Contacts

- Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care – Emergency Management Unit  
Email: [emergencymanagement.moh@ontario.ca](mailto:emergencymanagement.moh@ontario.ca)  
Healthcare provider hotline: 1-866-212-2272 (toll free)  
Employers' hotline: 1-866-331-0339 (toll free)
- Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care – Media Line  
Email: [media.moh@ontario.ca](mailto:media.moh@ontario.ca)  
Phone: 416-314-6197 (in Toronto) or 1-888-414-4774 (toll free)
- Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care – General information requests  
Email: [infoline.moh@ontario.ca](mailto:infoline.moh@ontario.ca)  
Phone: 1-866-532-3161 (toll free)  
TTY: 1-800-387-5559 (toll free)