

KEY DECISIONS

FOR IMPLEMENTING COMMUNITY MITIGATION MEASURES DURING A PANDEMIC

Everyday Precautions

Washing hands often with soap and water

Covering nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing

Avoiding touching eyes, nose or mouth

Staying home when ill with flu-like symptoms

Getting the flu vaccine if and when it is available

Regularly cleaning surfaces and items that are frequently touched

Use the information in this document to help determine the number, type, and intensity of community mitigation strategies for reducing the spread of influenza. What you choose to do will depend on your goals, the extent and severity of disease, and your capacity to prevent, mitigate, and treat influenza.



OVERRIDING PRINCIPLES

- Set and prioritize goals
 - Reduce transmission overall or in specific settings
 - Protect public health overall or those at highest risk
 - Maintain community functioning
- Make collaborative decisions using local information
- Match strategies to outbreak severity
- Use multiple strategies and start strategies early
- Reduce negative effects
- Communicate openly and frequently

BEFORE A PANDEMIC: BUILD A FOUNDATION

- Is a flexible influenza pandemic plan in place? Has it been reviewed, tested, and revised recently? Has it been updated based on experience with the 2009 H1N1 pandemic?
- Does the planning process include participants from national, state/territorial, and local government, as well as from multiple fields such as healthcare, public health, education, business, NGO, and faith-based organizations?
- Who are the decision-makers that can implement strategies?
- Which agencies or officials are authorized to implement stricter measures such as closing schools? Are they involved in pandemic planning?
- What legal authorities and policies need to be considered in the planning?
- Are there systems for gathering data on influenza-related illness, hospitalizations, and deaths?
- Do policies allow workers to miss work when they are sick or to care for a sick family member?
- What effect would missing work have on families? What support is available to help families?
- How well and quickly can plans and recommendations be communicated to the population?



DURING A PANDEMIC: SELECT AND START STRATEGIES

Community Mitigation Measures to Consider

For any level of severity:

Asking ill people to stay home

For a more severe pandemic consider adding these measures:

Asking exposed people to stay home

Closing schools or suspending classes

Restricting travel

Allowing more space between people at work and in the community

Recommending people wear facemasks

Cancelling large gatherings

Examine the Epidemiology

- What is the extent of the spread of influenza-related illness? Local? Regional? National? Global?
 - Who is most affected? Consider age groups, regions, etc.
 - How are schools, businesses, or other settings being affected?
 - What is the rate of outpatient visits for influenza-like illness?
- How severe is the disease being caused by influenza virus?
 - What percent of people with influenza-like illness are hospitalized?
 - What percent of hospitalized patients need intensive-care-unit admission or advanced care?
 - How many deaths are occurring and among which groups?

Consider Health Care

- Are health care providers and hospitals able to accommodate the influenza-like, illness-related visits they are receiving?
- Are there enough resources such as staff, hospital beds and ventilators? Is there enough capacity in emergency departments and intensive care units to accommodate increased demand?
- Is there enough medicine to treat persons at high risk for influenza-related complications?

Implement Strategies

- Do strategies need to be implemented in a particular order? If so, what should be done first?
- Are changes to legal authority or policy needed? If so, how feasible are these changes?
- How long will specific strategies take to get started? For how long can they be sustained?
- What resources are needed and available to implement the strategies?
- What obstacles could decrease the effectiveness of the strategies?
- What are public concerns about influenza-like illness? Do social norms and public opinion support or hinder specific strategies under consideration?
- What communication efforts can be used to explain the need for the strategies to the public? What communication efforts can be used to stop rumors and misinformation and spread correct information?
- How can the expected benefits be measured?
- What negative effects could occur? How could they be reduced?

AFTER A PANDEMIC: STOP AND EVALUATE STRATEGIES

- What are the triggers for stopping strategies?
- How difficult will it be to stop strategies? Should some strategies continue to be used?
- What are the plans for returning to normal operations?
- How well were strategies implemented? How effective were they in reaching the goals?
- How will lessons learned be applied to future planning?

For More Information

www.cdc.gov
www.who.org
www.flu.gov