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# Seasonal Flu vs. Pandemic Flu

Influenza is one of the world's greatest infectious disease challenges. But did you know that seasonal flu and pandemic flu are not the same?

## What is seasonal flu?



Influenza (flu) is a contagious respiratory illness caused by flu A and B viruses that infect the human respiratory tract. Annual flu epidemics occur among people worldwide.



A flu pandemic is a global outbreak of a new flu A virus in people that is very different from current and recently circulating seasonal flu A viruses.

## How often do seasonal flu epidemics occur?



Epidemics of seasonal flu happen every year. Fall and winter is the time for flu in the United States.

## How often do flu pandemics occur?

Flu pandemics happen rarely. Four flu pandemics have happened in the past 100 years, but experts agree another one is inevitable.

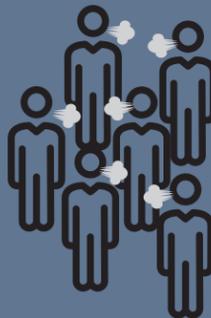


## How do seasonal flu viruses spread?



Flu viruses are thought to spread mainly from person to person through droplets made when someone with flu coughs, sneezes, or talks near a person (within 6 feet).

## How do pandemic flu viruses spread?



Pandemic flu viruses would spread in the same way as seasonal flu, but a pandemic virus will likely infect more people because few people have immunity to the pandemic flu virus.

## Is there a vaccine for seasonal flu?



Seasonal flu vaccines are made each year to vaccinate people against seasonal flu. Everyone 6 months and older should get a flu vaccine every year. For most people, only one dose of vaccine is needed.

## Is there a vaccine for pandemic flu?



Although the U.S. government maintains a limited stockpile of some pre-pandemic flu vaccines, vaccine may not be widely available in the early stages of a pandemic. Two doses of pandemic flu vaccine will likely be needed.

## Are there medications to treat seasonal flu?



Prescription medications called antiviral drugs can treat seasonal flu. During a severe flu season, there can be spot shortages of these drugs.

## Are there medications to treat pandemic flu?



Flu antiviral medications may be used to treat pandemic flu if the virus is susceptible to these drugs. While a limited amount of flu antiviral drugs are stockpiled for use during a pandemic, supplies may not be enough to meet demand during a pandemic.

## Who is at risk for complications from seasonal flu?



Young children, people 65 years and older, pregnant women, and people with certain long-term medical conditions are more likely to have serious flu complications.

## Who is at risk for complications from pandemic flu?



Because this is a new virus not previously circulating in humans, it's not possible to predict who would be most at risk of severe complications in a future pandemic. In some past pandemics, healthy young adults were at high risk for developing severe flu complications.



<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/pandemic-resources/basics/about.html>