

## 3. Preparing for a Flu Pandemic



### How you can help protect your organization from a pandemic

#### Plan now to help your organization later

The most important action that your organization can take is to **plan now**. There are a number of ways to prepare for an influenza pandemic:

1. Develop an internal pandemic planning task force and review the following checklists and include as part of your organization's pandemic plan:
  - CDC Guidelines  
<http://www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/businesschecklist.html>
  - Trust for America's Health—[www.healthyamericans.org](http://www.healthyamericans.org)
2. Engage your business continuity/preparedness department to expand their mission to include pandemic planning
3. Work with a business preparedness advisory organization to assist you in preparing your organization for an influenza pandemic

#### Ten steps your organization can take now<sup>20</sup>

1. Check that existing contingency plans are applicable to a pandemic. In particular, check to see that core business activities can be sustained over several weeks
2. Plan accordingly for interruptions of essential governmental services like sanitation, water and power and disruptions to the food supply
3. Identify your company's essential functions and the individuals who perform them. The absence of these individuals could seriously impair business continuity



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## How you can help protect your organization from a pandemic (cont'd)

#### Ten steps your organization can take now<sup>20</sup> (cont'd)

4. Build in the training redundancy necessary to ensure that work can be done in the event of an absentee rate of 25% to 30%
5. Maintain a healthy work environment by ensuring adequate air circulation and posting tips on how to stop the spread of germs at work
6. Promote hand and respiratory hygiene. Ensure wide and easy availability of alcohol-based hand sanitizer products
7. Determine which outside activities are critical to maintaining operations and develop alternatives in case they cannot function normally. For example, what transportation systems are needed to provide essential materials? Does the business operate on “just in time” inventory or is there typically some reserve?
8. Establish or expand policies and tools that enable employees to work from home with appropriate security and network access to applications
9. Expand online and self-service options for customers and business partners. Tell the workforce about the threat of pandemic flu and the steps the company is taking to prepare for it. In emergencies, employees demonstrate an increased tendency to listen to their employer, so clear and frequent communication is essential
10. Update sick leave and family and medical leave policies and communicate with employees about the importance of staying away from the workplace if they become ill. Concern about lost wages is the largest deterrent to self-quarantine



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## How is the US government protecting the country from a pandemic?

### A federal pandemic plan is in place

The National Strategy for Pandemic Influenza, issued by President Bush on November 1, 2005, guides our nation's preparedness and response to a flu pandemic with the intent of <sup>21</sup>:

- Stopping, slowing or otherwise limiting the spread of a pandemic to the US
- Limiting the domestic spread of a pandemic and mitigating disease, suffering and death
- Sustaining infrastructure and mitigating impact on the economy and the functioning of society

The Strategy charges the US Department of Health & Human Services (HHS) with leading the federal pandemic preparedness.<sup>21</sup>

The HHS Pandemic Influenza Plan is a blueprint for pandemic flu preparation and response. In particular, the HHS Plan provides guidance to national, state and local policy makers and health departments. The goal is for all involved to achieve a state of readiness and quick response. The HHS Plan is based on the knowledge that once a pandemic is triggered by the emergence of a novel influenza A virus subtype, it is a global event and all countries are at risk. The US will work in concert with the WHO and other international partners on containment and response activities abroad that also will assist the planning and monitoring for disease outbreaks in the US.

To review the plan, go to: <http://www.hhs.gov/pandemicflu/plan/>

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## How is the US government protecting the country from a pandemic? (cont'd)

### Components of the HHS plan

The HHS Plan includes an overview of the threat of pandemic flu, a description of the relationship of this document to other federal plans and an outline of key roles and responsibilities during a pandemic. In addition, the HHS Plan specifies needs and opportunities to build robust preparedness for and response to pandemic flu. The preparations made for a pandemic today will have lasting benefits for the future.

### Antiviral stockpiling is crucial<sup>22</sup>

Major components of the critical preparedness and ready response actions include:

- Intensifying surveillance and collaborating on containment measures—both international and domestic
- Stockpiling antivirals and vaccines, and working with industry to expand capacity for production of these medical countermeasures
- Creating a seamless network of federal, state and local preparedness, including increasing healthcare surge capacity
- Developing the public education and communications efforts that will be critical to keeping the public informed





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## How is the US government protecting the country from a pandemic? (cont'd)

#### A plan based on known pandemic principles<sup>23</sup>

Strategies outlined in the HHS Plan are based on an understanding of pandemics and flu, and are guided by several overarching principles:

- Preparedness will require coordination among federal, state and local government and partners in the private sector
- An informed and responsive public is essential to minimizing the health effects of a pandemic and the resulting consequences to society
- Domestic vaccine supply and production capacity sufficient to provide vaccine for the entire US population are critical
- Quantities of antiviral drugs sufficient to treat 25% of the US population should be stockpiled
- Sustained human-to-human transmission anywhere in the world will be the triggering event to initiate a pandemic response by the US
- When possible and appropriate, basic public health measures will be employed to reduce person-to-person viral transmission and to prevent or delay influenza outbreaks
- At the start of a pandemic, vaccine, which will initially be in short supply, will be procured and distributed to state and local health departments for immunization of predetermined priority groups
- At the onset of a pandemic, antiviral drugs from public stockpiles will be distributed to predetermined priority groups



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## How are other organizations preparing for a pandemic?

- 66% of organizations surveyed in November 2005 said they have not adequately planned to protect themselves<sup>24</sup>
- 18% of attendees at a February 2006 pandemic conference had a pandemic plan in place<sup>25</sup>
- Organizations that have pandemic plans generally address issues of<sup>26</sup>:

- **Business continuity:** impact of absenteeism on operations, technology, travel
- **Awareness/Education:** employee communication, educational materials
- **Prevention:** promoting good health habits, procuring supplies
- **Treatment:** purchasing antivirals for appropriate employees (for more information, see section 5: TAMIFLU® [oseltamivir phosphate] Supply and Ordering)

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**How are other organizations preparing for a pandemic? (cont'd)**



Company	Illustrative Flu Pandemic Preparation Measures
<b>HSBC</b> <sup>27</sup>	Developing “Remote Working” plans to operate under a flu pandemic scenario that would keep as much as 50% of its employees from being at work
<b>Deutsche Bank</b>	Taking measures to ensure that employees in infected zones don't transmit the disease to coworkers, and preparing for the economic shocks triggered by a global pandemic
<b>Microsoft</b> <sup>28</sup>	Issued all 1,200 employees at its Mountain View campus a bottle of hand sanitizer, with Web link for info on avian flu  Installed hand sanitizer dispensers throughout its buildings
<b>Boeing</b> <sup>26</sup>	Assembled a task force to examine business continuity issues and worker-protection plans  Assessed minimum workers to conduct core activities. Estimates nonattendance rates of up to 30%  Exploring options to minimize operational disruptions (eg, cross-training, reconfiguring shifts, virtual work)
<b>Virgin Atlantic</b> <sup>26</sup>	Purchased 10,000 courses of TAMIFLU® (oseltamivir phosphate) for employees who frequently travel internationally

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## What role will vaccines play during a pandemic?

### Vaccination

Vaccination is one of the most effective ways to minimize suffering and death due to influenza.<sup>29</sup> In fact, vaccination is universally regarded as the most important medical intervention for preventing influenza and reducing its health consequences.

Flu vaccination is recommended for people who are at high risk for complications if they contract flu. It is also recommended for people aged 50 to 64, since one third of individuals in the age range have medical conditions that place them at increased risk for complications of flu. Flu vaccination is also recommended for those who will be in close contact with others at high risk for complications of flu. It is not recommended for people younger than 6 months of age, individuals with severe allergies to chicken eggs, those who have had a severe reaction to flu vaccine in the past or anyone who has ever developed Guillain-Barré syndrome.

In a pandemic, it could take several months to develop an effective vaccine. Presently, there is no commercially available vaccine to protect humans against potential pandemic strains. However, research studies to test potential vaccines to protect humans against pandemic flu are under way.<sup>22</sup> For more information about the vaccine development process, visit the National Institutes of Health Web site at <http://www.nih.gov>.





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## What role will antivirals play during a pandemic?

### Antivirals

There are two drugs that, if administered early enough postinfection, have been shown to reduce symptoms of influenza types A and B in some infected humans. These drugs belong to a class of antiviral drugs known as “neuraminidase inhibitors.” These antivirals can also be taken to prevent illness upon suspected exposure to the flu virus, before symptoms develop. The stockpiling of antivirals is a key component of the Federal Pandemic Preparedness Plan.<sup>21</sup>

