

## X. Sample Newsletter Article on Pandemic Flu Preparedness

### The Possibility of a Pandemic Is Real: Setting the Stage

You may already have heard the word “pandemic,” and you may be wondering what it really means. A flu (influenza) pandemic is an outbreak of a new flu virus that spreads around the world. The virus will spread easily from person to person, mostly through coughing and sneezing. Because the virus is new to people, everyone will be at risk of getting it.

Pandemics have occurred repeatedly throughout history. Few people alive today can recall the last major pandemic (1918–1919), and they typically regard the potential of such an event as impossible. This is not the case. In fact, scientists think the H5N1 virus, better known as avian (bird) flu, may be changing and could evolve into a pandemic flu virus.

During the next pandemic, many people will get sick and some will die. If a pandemic similar to the pandemic of 1918 were to happen today, health experts estimate that 90 million Americans could get sick, and nearly 2 million Americans could die. People will not be able to come to work because they are sick or are caring for someone who is sick. Services in our community, such as utilities, grocery stores, and public transportation, may be disrupted. Schools may be dismissed. Eventually there will be a vaccine; however it will take time to produce a large supply.

Preparing now will make it easier for you and your family during a pandemic. We encourage you to take some simple steps, such as stocking up on food, medicines, and other essential supplies; practicing good health habits; and making advance plans to minimize confusion and disruption in an emergency.

While no one can prevent a pandemic from happening, government, communities, and individuals can work together to prepare the nation for a flu pandemic and minimize its impact. It is up to every one of us to be involved in preparing our families.

We are currently in the process of making pandemic flu information readily available. In the meantime, information about protecting yourself and your family can be found at [www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov).

This information is brought to you by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

