

Communicable Diseases/Pandemics

Allen County Public Health Preparations

Because of international travel, diseases can be spread worldwide in a short amount of time. Ongoing concerns about the severity of a pandemic have led the U.S. government to work to improve overall preparation them. One aspect of this preparation is to learn more about protecting ourselves, families, and communities in the event of a pandemic. This document focuses on common sense principles that will be useful in formulating plans to prepare for a widespread communicable disease.

If a public health emergency happens in our community, Allen County Public Health will be the local agency responsible for preparing and guiding medical response and public information efforts. During such an emergency, a critical role of the Public Health Department will be to work with other local first responders, such as fire and police. The Public Health Department will also coordinate response activities with state and federal agencies.

Allen County Public Health is providing this information to help you understand what response you may be asked to take in the event of a pandemic.

What is a pandemic?

A pandemic is a worldwide outbreak of a communicable disease. There have been multiple influenza pandemics resulting in the loss of numerous lives. It is important to know how to prepare for a pandemic before it arises in order to limit the number of those that contract the disease.

Limit contact with others

- Limiting contact among people

helps to slow the spread of the virus and helps to save lives. Being around other people makes you more likely to get sick or to make others sick.

- Until a vaccine can be made, limiting contact among people will be our main tool for helping to contain the disease and to prevent others from getting it.
- If you are sick, plan to stay at home for at least 10 days. Most care can be received from home. Hospitals may only be able to take the most critically ill or those with special needs.
- Make plans to have someone take care of you and your household if you get sick.

In more severe pandemics, even people who are not sick may be asked to stay home. This is because other household members may be infected but not sick yet. They could spread the pandemic flu virus to others.

Find out what your job and schools pandemic plans are

In severe pandemics, students may be dismissed from school. Schools, after-school functions, and child-care programs may be closed. Parents may be asked to protect their children by keeping them from being with other children outside of school. Find out what your school or child-care program is planning to do in a pandemic. Plan how you will take care of your children if they need to stay home, and how you would limit contact with others.

How to reduce the risk of contracting and spreading the disease

- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially before eating, drinking, or touching your face. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand gel.
- Cough and sneeze in your sleeve.
- Throw away used tissues then wash your hands

Vaccinations

If a vaccination is or becomes available, talk with your doctor to see if it may benefit you.

Listen to the radio and news for more disease specific pandemic information.

If you have any questions about pandemics please contact Allen County Public Health at 419-228-4457. Health Department staff members are available to answer your questions Monday to Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. You can also visit www.allencountypublichealth.org. For information about putting together an Emergency Preparation Plan, visit the FEMA site at www.ready.gov. Also, see the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Web site at www.emergency.cdc.gov for additional information.