

# Planning for a human influenza pandemic

Information for parents from the Department  
for Education and Skills

Every Child Matters

Change For Children

department for

**education and skills**

creating opportunity, releasing potential, achieving excellence

Experts advise that a flu pandemic is inevitable, but cannot say when it will happen. All government departments are planning ahead, and advising businesses and organisations to plan and be ready. We have prepared this short note for parents and carers as part of a package of guidance to local authorities, schools, colleges and children's services. The publication of this information does not mean that the probability of a pandemic has changed.

### **What is pandemic flu?**

Pandemic flu is a type of influenza that occurs every few decades and which spreads rapidly to affect most countries and regions around the world. The symptoms of pandemic flu are similar to those of 'ordinary' flu but are usually more severe.

For more details about pandemic flu read the leaflet 'Pandemic Flu - Important information for you and your family', available from the Department of Health (DH) from 08701 555 455 or [dh@prolog.uk.com](mailto:dh@prolog.uk.com) or at [www.dh.gov.uk/pandemicflu](http://www.dh.gov.uk/pandemicflu) .

### **What you should do now**

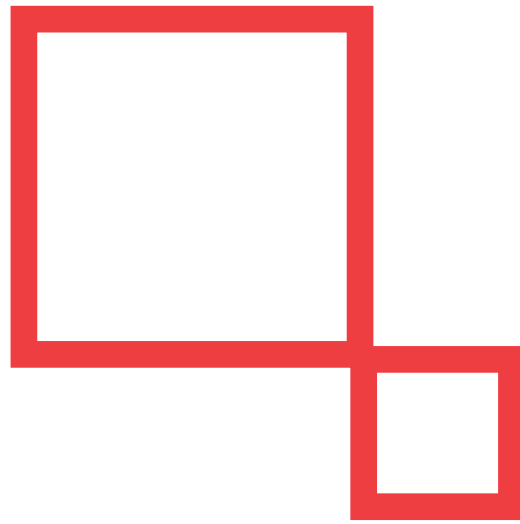
Help your child's childminder, nursery, pre-school group, school or other educational institution by making sure they have up to date contact details for you: your address, telephone numbers (home, work and mobile) and e-mail as appropriate. They will want to pass on advice when a pandemic is on its way and after it arrives.

Teach and encourage your children to:

- wash their hands using soap and water
- cover their mouth when coughing or sneezing – using a tissue is good
- throw dirty tissues away quickly into bins

These simple actions are the sort of thing that every child should do, even in ordinary times, but they will also help to slow the spread of a pandemic.

When a pandemic happens, we will make sure that messages from the Department of Health are passed to schools and childcare settings, through local authorities.



As ever, the school or childcare setting will advise you of any actions that it needs to take to protect children's health and well-being.

### **What may happen if a pandemic arrives in the UK?**

During a pandemic, most services will try to maintain normal services. However, it is possible that some schools or services such as childcare may be advised to close to stop the virus spreading between children; or some may need to close because of staff being off work ill. If this happens, you will get information from the school, nursery or childcare provider if they are closing, and they would also contact you to advise you of their re-opening.

If your child is at school, and the school remains open, your normal duty to send your child to school still applies. If your child shows any signs of flu-like illness, keep them at home and inform the school.

During the pandemic the school may need to contact you at short notice, for example if your child falls sick during the day. This is why it is so important that your contact details, for you and any one else who looks after your child, are kept up to date.

Other services may be affected, such as the school meals service. The school should advise you of any alternative arrangements it has to make in these circumstances.

### **What you should do now, if you want to know more about pandemic flu**

You can find the advice that the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) has issued to children's services, schools and colleges at [www.teachernet.gov.uk/humanflupandemic](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/humanflupandemic)

The overall government response strategy can be found at [www.dh.gov.uk/pandemicflu](http://www.dh.gov.uk/pandemicflu)

You can download this publication online at  
[www.teachernet.gov.uk/humanflupandemic](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/humanflupandemic)

Crown Copyright 2006

STERL/0706/WEB

Produced by the Department for Education and Skills