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# Facts about an influenza pandemic

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This fact sheet provides basic information for health care providers.

## Influenza pandemics occur when all four of the following occur:

1. A new influenza A virus is detected.
2. Human-to-human transmission happens easily.
3. The new virus causes serious clinical illness and death.
4. The population has little or no immunity to the virus.

## Influenza Pandemic

- An influenza pandemic occurs when a new influenza virus appears against which the human population has little or no immunity, resulting in several, simultaneous epidemics worldwide with enormous numbers of deaths and illnesses.
- Unlike many other viral respiratory infections (i.e. the common cold) the flu causes severe illness and life-threatening complications in many people.
- The influenza virus is divided into three groups: A, B & C. Type C rarely causes human illness. Only influenza A is associated with pandemics.
- With the increase in global transportation and communications, as well as urbanization and overcrowded conditions, epidemics of a new influenza virus are likely to spread quickly around the world.
- Outbreaks of influenza in animals, especially when happening simultaneously with outbreaks in humans, increase the chances of a pandemic, through the merging of animal and human

influenza viruses to create a new virus, which affects humans.

### Influenza Symptoms

Influenza is caused by a flu virus which infects the respiratory tract (nose, throat, lungs). It usually starts suddenly and *may* include these symptoms:

- **Fever**
- **Muscle pain and weakness**
- **Headache**
- **Tiredness**
- **Dry cough**
- **Sore throat**
- **Runny or stuffy nose**
- **Diarrhea and vomiting (seen especially in children)**

### For more information

[www.health.gov.on.ca/english/providers/program/emu/emu\\_mn.html](http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/providers/program/emu/emu_mn.html)

Or call toll free:

Health Care Provider's Hotline 1-866-212-2272