

OCWR Fast Facts

Pandemic Flu

A pandemic is a global disease outbreak marked by serious illness that spreads easily person-to-person worldwide. Influenza (flu) is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses that infect the nose, throat, and lungs. An influenza pandemic occurs when a new influenza virus emerges for which there is little or no immunity in the human population.

The COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic is now the deadliest disease event in U.S. history. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), as of April 20, 2022, a total of 987,601 COVID-19 deaths have been reported in the United States. The 1918 influenza pandemic is regarded as the second most deadly single human disease outbreak, sickening an estimated 25–30 percent of the 1.8 billion people in the world. At least 25–50 million of those infected died in less than a year, including 675,000 Americans.

Epidemic vs. Pandemic vs. Endemic

A pandemic is a type of epidemic. However, when speaking in terms of a pandemic versus an epidemic, the former term is used to describe a disease that affects an entire nation or even the world at large. Therefore, the difference between pandemic and epidemic is that while an epidemic may affect just one or a few areas, a pandemic affects the entire world.

- An **EPIDEMIC** is a disease that affects a large number of people within a community, population, or region.
- A **PANDEMIC** is an epidemic that is spread over multiple countries or continents.
- An **ENDEMIC** is the constant presence and/or usual prevalence of a disease or infectious agent in a population within a geographic area.
- An **OUTBREAK** is a greater-than-anticipated increase in the number of **endemic** cases. It can also be a single case in a new area. If it is not quickly controlled, an outbreak can become an epidemic.

Epidemic



Pandemic



Endemic



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advancing workplace rights, safety and health, and accessibility in the legislative branch

A pandemic outbreak of any virus could immediately affect employees and workplace operations. Planning for this type of nontraditional emergency is important in order to protect the health and safety of legislative branch employees and minimize the impact on society and the economy.

The CDC and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) websites provide pandemic plan preparation guidance and other resources. These guides can help congressional offices identify exposure and health risk levels in workplace settings. Appropriate control measures—such as good hygiene, cough etiquette, social distancing, the use of personal protective equipment, and staying home from work when ill—are also included. Each office should develop its own plan—with reference to the resources listed below—that should account for visitors and assign roles and responsibilities.



Organizing the Workplace for a Pandemic

- Identify essential operations functions
- Determine essential and nonessential personnel
- Prepare a succession strategy to account for absenteeism
- Make employees aware that they should not come to work if they are ill, and/or if they arrive ill, they will be sent home
- Assess equipment requirements
- Consider telecommuting possibilities
- Evaluate computer/server requirements and upkeep
- Ensure the safety and health of employees while at work
- Train employees and conduct tabletop exercises at all levels of the organization
- Communicate with employees away from the job
- Plan for payroll, benefit, and other human resource functions
- Verify pandemic information on and off campus
- Prepare for change in patterns of commerce including interrupted supply delivery

Sustaining the Workplace During a Pandemic

- Communicate with the appropriate agencies regarding the status of the pandemic
- Coordinate with appropriate local authorities
- Protect employees who are essential to report to work
- Offer medical evaluations of employees who report to work and become ill
- Ensure that ill employees receive care and arrive at their destinations safely
- Plan for and provide personal protective equipment (e.g., N95 masks)
- Stockpile and maintain equipment and supplies

Visit the following CDC websites for additional information:

Healthy Habits to Prevent Flu

Hand Hygiene Fact Sheets



Fast Stats

Five of the Worst Pandemics in History

The Black Death (1326–1353)

Death toll: 75–200 million // **Cause:** bubonic plague

From 1346 to 1353, an outbreak of the plague ravaged Europe, Africa, and Asia, with an estimated death toll between 75 and 200 million people. Thought to have originated in Asia, the plague most likely jumped continents via the fleas living on the rats that so frequently lived aboard merchant ships. Ports were major urban centers at the time and were the perfect breeding grounds for the plague.

Did you know?

At the time the bubonic plague was ripping through the continent, officials in the Venetian-controlled port city of Ragusa (now

Dubrovnik, Croatia) decided to keep newly arrived sailors in isolation until they could prove they were not sick. Sailors were held on their ships for 30 days, which became known in Venetian law as a trentino. Within a century, the standard isolation period grew from 30 days to 40 days and the term changed from trentino to quarantino—the root of the English word quarantine that we use today.

The Asian Flu/H2N2 (1957–1958)

Death toll: 1–4 million // **Cause:** influenza

In February 1957, a new influenza A virus (H2N2), referred to as the Asian Flu, emerged in East Asia and triggered a pandemic. It was first reported in Singapore in February 1957, in Hong Kong in April 1957, and in coastal cities in the United States in summer 1957. Per the CDC, the estimated number of deaths was 1.1 million worldwide and 116,000 in the United States.

The Swine Flu/H1N1v (2009)

Death toll: 18,000 // **Cause:** influenza

The 2009 H1N1v influenza virus was first detected in people in the United States in April 2009. This virus was originally referred to as the Swine Flu because laboratory testing showed that its gene segments were similar to influenza viruses that were most recently identified in and known to circulate among pigs. This virus is actually a combination of viruses from pigs, birds, and humans. The v stands for variant and indicates that the virus normally circulates in animals but has been detected in humans. In August of 2010, the World Health Organization declared the pandemic over. Since that time, scientists have changed the way they name viruses.

The Spanish Flu/H1N1 (1918–1920)

Death toll: 25–50 million // **Cause:** influenza

Between 1918 and 1920, a disturbingly deadly outbreak of influenza tore across the globe, infecting over a third of the world's population and ending the lives of 20–50 million people. Of the 500 million people infected in the 1918 pandemic, the mortality rate was estimated at 10–20 percent, with up to 25 million deaths in the first 25 weeks alone. The nature of the victims distinguished the 1918 flu pandemic from other influenza outbreaks: whereas influenza had previously killed primarily juveniles and the elderly or already weakened patients, in 1918 it began striking down hardy and completely healthy young adults, while leaving children and those with weaker immune systems still alive.

The Hong Kong Flu/H3N2 (1968–1969)

Death toll: 1 million // **Cause:** influenza

The 1968 pandemic was caused by an influenza. It was first noted in the United States in September 1968. The estimated number of deaths was 1 million worldwide and approximately 100,000 in the United States. Most deaths were in people age 65 years and older. The H3N2 virus today still circulates worldwide as a seasonal influenza A virus.



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