

Champlain College
Pandemic Flu Preparedness Planning
Frequently Asked Questions

What is an influenza pandemic?

A pandemic is a global disease outbreak. An influenza pandemic occurs when a new influenza A virus emerges for which there is little or no immunity in the human population, begins to cause serious illness, and then spreads easily person-to-person worldwide.

How do pandemic viruses occur?

New influenza viruses emerge as a result of a process called antigenic shift, which causes a sudden and major change in influenza A viruses. These changes occur when proteins on the surface of the virus combine in new ways as a result of mutation or exchange of genetic material between multiple influenza viruses. If such changes result in a new influenza A virus subtype that can infect humans and spread easily from person to person, an influenza pandemic can occur.

What age groups are most likely to be affected during an influenza pandemic?

Although scientists cannot predict the specific consequences of an influenza pandemic, it is likely that many age groups would be seriously affected. The greatest risk of hospitalization and death – as seen during the last two pandemics in 1957 and 1968 and during annual influenza – will be infants, the elderly, and those with underlying health conditions. However, in the 1918 pandemic, most deaths occurred in young adults. Few if any people would have immunity to the virus.

What are the symptoms of avian influenza in humans?

People infected with the current strain of the avian virus (H5N1) have shown everything from typical human influenza-like symptoms (fever, cough, sore throat, and muscle aches) to pneumonia, severe respiratory diseases, and other life-threatening complications. Symptoms of avian influenza may depend on which specific virus subtype and strain caused the infection.

How do people become infected with avian influenza viruses?

Most cases of H5N1 avian influenza infection in humans have resulted from direct or close contact with infected poultry (e.g., domesticated chicken, ducks, and turkeys) or surfaces possibly contaminated from feces of infected birds. For a pandemic of influenza to occur, avian influenza must mutate/change to be able to be passed easily from person to person. A pandemic of influenza can arise from changes that occur in certain kinds of highly

pathogenic bird flu but no one knows when or even if this will happen. Today, there have been no reported cases of sustained human-to-human transmission of avian flu.

Do avian influenza viruses infect humans?

Avian influenza (bird flu) viruses do not usually infect humans, but a number of confirmed cases of human infection with bird flu viruses have occurred since 1997, usually in persons who had close contact with infected poultry. One bird flu virus strain known as avian influenza A (H5N1) has been of particular concern in recent years.

The World Health Organization (WHO) maintains situation updates and cumulative reports of human cases of avian influenza A (H5N1). This information is available at <http://pandemicflu.gov/#map>. Additional information is available at <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/avian/gen-info/avian-flu-humans.htm> .

Will I be able to fly or travel to distant locations during a campus evacuation?

You might, but do not count on air travel as your only exit strategy from campus. While air travel may be possible, staffing and fuel shortages may cause delays. It is essential therefore that you have an evacuation location within reasonable driving distance from Champlain College.

What about classes and graduation?

Champlain College is implementing strategies to allow students to continue their education online through WebCT so that graduation plans will not be interrupted.

What are other schools doing?

Due to the need for social distancing, most colleges and universities are implementing evacuation and closure plans at this time.

Will I still have access to email and information from the College?

The college will strive to maintain a connection for all students. There may be periods where the ability connect with the College is disrupted due to staff illness or shortages, however we anticipate the disruptions will be temporary.

What do I do if my initial evacuation plan does not work?

It is important to take this planning process seriously and develop plans that have a high chance of success. Since Champlain College is not able to verify student's plans, it is up to you to make a plan for yourself. If your plan fails despite your best efforts, Champlain College may not be in a position to help you and you would have to quickly devise a secondary alternative.

For more information please visit www.pandemicflu.gov