

Pandemic influenza

What is the swine influenza?

- A new influenza virus that can be passed from human-to-human via droplettes in the air. Because it is new to humans it is unpredictable and the severity of the illness could change from one outbreak to the next.

Transmission

- Like respiratory infections, through droplets of saliva/mucus from one person to another, mainly while coughing or sneezing

Symptoms

- A new kind of influenza with very similar symptoms to regular influenza, such as sudden illness, fever, cough and shortness of breath. It can cause a severe illness.
- May be accompanied by chills, runny nose, sore throat, tiredness and feeling unwell or loss of appetite. Symptoms can become severe.

In case of epidemic

- ➔ Isolation of sick people from those who are not sick
- ➔ Maintaining a safe distance
- ➔ Community mobilization
- ➔ Health promotion

- ➔ Detection and referral of new and suspected cases to health facilities
- ➔ Respiratory etiquette
- ➔ Personal hygiene / handwashing
- ➔ Spread the 3 messages in this toolkit as widely as you can in your community
- ➔ Psychosocial support

Volunteer protection

OVERVIEW



Working in epidemics can be extremely risky as volunteers can also catch the disease and get sick.

Your National Society should provide proper protection for volunteers working in epidemic situations.

Advice for volunteers

- ➔ During influenza epidemics and pandemics special masks, disinfectant gel and gloves should be used as needed, depending on availability and the severity of the local outbreak. This is called personal protection equipment (PPE).
- ➔ You should be trained and familiar with using protection equipment before you are in a situation in which you need to use it. Try the equipment out beforehand and learn how to use it properly.
- ➔ Maintain good hygiene
- ➔ Build up good body immunity by having a proper diet, adequate rest and regular exercise
- ➔ Reduce stress and avoid smoking
- ➔ Wear a face mask when necessary
- ➔ Stay at home in you have flue symptoms
- ➔ Avoid close contact with people who appear to be unwell and have flu symptoms
- ➔ Wash your hands with soap and water frequently and thoroughly (see Message to community #1)

Communicating with the community

OVERVIEW

To avoid the spread of influenza it is important to teach individuals in your community how to protect themselves and maintain healthy practices.

To do this, you need to know how to communicate health messages to the community. Remember that different forms and methods of communication should be used depending on the target group and the number of available volunteers.

Groups – Do not undertake communication with the community that creates groups of people as this is a situation where the influenza can spread more easily.

Visual methods – Pictures, drawings and symbols can be used as an effective communication method for people who are not able to read too well.

Written materials – Leaflets, one-page flyers, newsletters, etc. (all of these are very useful if the target groups are able to read).

One-to-one communication – Talking directly to people, counselling and education by peers/friends can influence people to change their behaviours.

Media – Using mass media such as radio and television or printed media such as newspapers to give messages to many people at the same time can be a very effective way for you to design good and suitable messages for your community.

Peer education – Peers (people of similar age and background) are often very effective relays for communicating messages on how to live healthily. Peer education can be done in neighbourhoods, schools, youth clubs, work places and religious institutions.

Oral communication – Short talks with people in the community, house-to-house visits, storytelling or one-to-one communication are all very effective ways of communicating with the community. Do not undertake direct contact unless you are properly protected.

School-based learning – Teachers can play an important role in influencing their students to change behaviour and in communicating key messages to them.

Religious institutions – Religious leaders and institutions can also play a significant role in influencing community participation and promoting good health practices.

Adult learning – Use interactive methods to promote discussion among adults, such as real-life examples and illustrations. Tell stories about how people can help their families and others.

Message to community #1

Handwashing

OVERVIEW



Washing hands is an important way to prevent the spread of influenza and to protect oneself from getting infected. Handwashing is a major factor in protecting yourself when dealing with influenza epidemics and pandemics. This method of handwashing should be used whenever you are helping with an epidemic or pandemic.

Wash your hands BEFORE:

- ➔ Preparing or eating food
- ➔ Treating a wound (yours or someone else's)
- ➔ Caring for someone who is ill
- ➔ Breastfeeding
- ➔ Changing infants

Wash your hands AFTER:

- ➔ Coughing or sneezing
- ➔ Caring for someone who is ill
- ➔ Touching things or surfaces that might have been touched by someone who is sick
- ➔ Using the toilet
- ➔ Changing infants
- ➔ Handling raw meats
- ➔ Contact with animals (including pets)
- ➔ Handling rubbish or anything that might be contaminated

How to wash hands

- ➔ Wet your hands and use soap, ash or alcohol based disinfectant.
- ➔ Rub all parts of your hands together for 10 to 15 seconds.
- ➔ Use lots of friction and remember to wash all surfaces, including backs of hands and between fingers as follows. (see also handwashing illustration)
- ➔ To handwash during an epidemic and eliminate all germs that can be on your hands, you need to:
 - Use either soap or alcohol-based disinfectant
 - Wash your hands as usual
 - Then wash thoroughly between your fingers
 - Scrub the tips of the fingers of the two hands together
 - Wash each of your thumbs with the other hand
 - Scrub the tips of the fingers of each hand on the palm of the other hand
- ➔ Rinse hands well so they are free of soap or ash.
- ➔ Dry hands with a towel.

Message to community #2

Respiratory etiquette

Why learn respiratory etiquette?

- ➔ Influenza can be transmitted from one person to another through droplets of saliva or mucus or in the air.
- ➔ This means that when we cough, we may spread the disease to other people and make them sick.
- ➔ To avoid giving the disease to other people, we have to learn not to spread the germs by coughing in the open.

DOs and DON'Ts

- A lot of people cough or sneeze into their hands in order to keep germs from spreading. This is NOT good because, after you cough or sneeze in your hand, you can still transmit the germs by touching things or shaking people's hands. **DON'T COUGH OR SNEEZE INTO YOUR HAND.**
- The correct way to cough or sneeze without transmitting germs is to use a handkerchief or your sleeve. When you cough or sneeze into either of these, it is less likely you will spread the germs. **DO COUGH OR SNEEZE INTO A HANDKERCHIEF OR ON YOUR SLEEVE.**

What you can DO

- ➔ Explain to others why respiratory etiquette is important and how it helps to prevent diseases transmitted by droplets carried in the air.
- ➔ Show them how to cough and sneeze properly and tell them to show others at home or in the community.
- ➔ Make posters that show the DOs and DON'Ts of respiratory etiquette and put them up around your community.

Message to community #3

Keeping a safe distance

What you need to KNOW

- ➔ One of the best ways to prevent the spread of influenza is social distancing.
- ➔ Because influenza is spread by droplets released while coughing or sneezing, the way to prevent transmission is either for the sick person to follow coughing etiquette or by others keeping a safe distance from sick people who may cough or sneeze droplets containing germs.
- ➔ If someone is closer than 1.5 metres to a person who is sick with influenza, he/she may inhale the droplets and get sick too.

Social distancing is about staying at a safe distance from other people in the case of a pandemic.

Tips to protection yourself from influenza

- ➔ In an influenza pandemic, always protect yourself with the proper equipment, by wearing a mask, gloves, etc. as needed, depending on availability and the severity of the local outbreak.
- ➔ Keep a distance of at least 1.5 metres from people who may be sick with influenza.
- ➔ Do not shake hands with or touch people who may be sick with influenza; they may have coughed or sneezed into their hands and can then pass the germs on to you.
- ➔ Use health and hygiene promotion to tell the community about the importance of social distancing and teach them how to avoid getting sick with influenza.



Too close



Safe distance to keep apart

Surveillance and reporting

OVERVIEW



Surveillance is a system to detect new patients with a disease in the community. Reporting is a system of sharing helpful information discovered while doing surveillance to your local branch and the health authorities.

What you need to **KNOW** and **DO** (surveillance)

- ➔ Follow information on the disease affecting or reaching near to, or within your community.
- ➔ First, the community should be mapped properly and you should know where people live and work.
- ➔ You should be able to scan the whole community through house-to-house visits.
- ➔ Knowing who is vulnerable in the community will help to identify people who are more likely to have a harder time caring for themselves.
- ➔ Surveillance should enable you to direct specific health messages and refer severe cases of a disease to health facilities.
- ➔ When people who are sick with the disease are detected, refer them to a health facility.
- ➔ Divide up into surveillance teams who will actively look for sick people and their families in need of help (care, food, water, etc.), in their sections of the community.

What you need to **KNOW** (reporting)

- ➔ When working in the community and doing surveillance, volunteers get information that is important for others to tackle the epidemic.
- ➔ Communicating this information to your local branch, other volunteer teams and health authorities is very important to ensure the best possible response during an epidemic. This is called reporting.
- ➔ Remember that reporting has to be done systematically. This means that everyone doing the reporting has to follow the same method so there is no confusion. Talk to your local branch and health authorities to find out what reporting system will work the best for your work and situation.
- ➔ Record the cases you find and put all the records together with those of other teams so that you can build a clear picture of how the disease is spreading in the community.

Isolating sick people and referral to health facilities

OVERVIEW



With some diseases, it is necessary to isolate people who are sick in the home to prevent them from passing the infection to others. In other cases patients cannot be treated at home and must be referred to health facilities.

Isolating patients is not imprisonment; it is not done forcibly and should be carried out with their consent. You need to explain to patients and their families why isolation is necessary.

Isolating sick people: What you need to KNOW

- ➔ In influenza epidemics and pandemics, it may be very necessary to keep sick people away from others to limit the spread of the disease.
- ➔ This means that one person, who must have all the necessary protection, should take care of the patient to reduce the chances of infecting others. This is called “barrier nursing”.
- ➔ This person will provide care, food and water and communicate with the patient.
- ➔ If a case is found, the need for isolation should be explained to the patient and his/her family. This IS NOT DONE FORCIBLY and the wishes of the family should be respected.
- ➔ The person identified to care for the patient should be shown how to support the patient and how to protect themselves and be provided with proper protection equipment.
- ➔ Try to avoid isolation becoming a reason for stigma and the social rejection of the patient and his/her family by explaining to the community why it is being done and seeking the help of elders and community leaders in fighting any stigma.

Referral to health facilities: What you need KNOW

- ➔ Know how to tell when someone is severely sick with the disease. Know the symptoms and guidelines for action.
- ➔ Know where the health facilities close to your community are. Know what capacity each one has and how to get to them. Do they have any ambulances? Can they be reached by public transport?
- ➔ Talk to health professionals and agree with them on an appropriate means to send sick people from the community to the health facilities.
- ➔ When doing disease surveillance, always keep the idea of referral in mind.

Handling dead bodies and psychological first aid

Handling dead bodies: What you need to KNOW

- ➔ The bodies of people who have died from certain diseases must be promptly and safely buried to protect others from the spread of the epidemic.
- ➔ There may be specialists from the Ministry of Health or other organizations doing the burials. If this is the case, YOU SHOULD DO THE HEALTH PROMOTION AND LET THEM DO THEIR JOB.
- ➔ Burial of dead people is a sensitive issue for the community. You must be careful not to upset people and help them to understand why the burial of their loved one is being done in a different way from usual. Talk to community leaders and seek their support for what you are doing. Always undertake this task with discretion and respect.
- ➔ Always take care and protect yourself before anything else and use personal protection equipment when needed.
- ➔ Provide psychosocial support to the families of the dead person.

- If you have to do it, always ask for professional help and advice.
- The main duty of Red Cross and Red Crescent volunteers is to conduct health promotion in the community. You can make more difference in this way than in any other way.

Psychological first aid: What you need to KNOW

- ➔ Accept any feeling that the individual expresses
- ➔ Assist with next steps
 - Make sure the person has someone to look after them or someone to talk to
 - Provide factual information about specialized resources and services
- ➔ Help to meet immediate needs
- ➔ Listen