

## AN IMPORTANT MESSAGE About the Pandemic

Experts believe it is not a matter of *IF* a pandemic occurs but *WHEN*.

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About three to four times each century, for reasons not completely understood, a radical change in the influenza A virus occurs causing a new strain to surface. A pandemic flu virus could materialize if an avian influenza (bird flu) virus mixes with a human flu virus or if an existing flu virus mutates, creating a new strain that is more powerful and more deadly. That's what we're concerned about!

Even though it's difficult right now to predict the complete impact of a pandemic, it is believed that it could affect between 15 – 35 per cent of the population. Imagine the impact on our everyday life, including hospitals, schools, and businesses. We can all remember SARS. An influenza pandemic could be much worse.

**Simply put – we need to be prepared!**

The Lung Association of Saskatchewan is taking the risk of a widespread global health threat very seriously and has been working closely with emergency preparedness specialists to determine the best way to help residents of our province when the pandemic occurs.

Together we can make a difference in your community.

## SOME SIMPLE WAYS to Help You Prepare for the Flu Season

We all need to play an active role in staying healthy and preventing the spread of influenza. These simple steps will help you whether it's the seasonal flu that circulates each winter or pandemic influenza. Please share these important tips with your children, friends, neighbors, and co-workers:

- Ensure that you and your family get an annual flu shot;
- Twenty seconds of hand washing with warm water and soaps helps remove bacteria and viruses. If hand washing is not possible, use a waterless sanitizing gel containing 62% alcohol;
- Cover up when you cough or sneeze. If a tissue is not available, raise your arm up to your face to cough or sneeze into your sleeve. If you use a tissue, dispose of it and wash your hands immediately;
- Keep shared surfaces like doorknobs, light switches, and telephones clean as bacteria can live up to two days on hard surfaces;
- If you get sick, please stay at home so that you do not spread your illness to others.

**For more information, please go to  
[www.sk.lung.ca/pandemic](http://www.sk.lung.ca/pandemic).**