

Further information is available from;

- **Patient Advise and Liaison Service (PALS)**  
PALS will act on your behalf when handling patient and family concerns, they can also help you get support from other local or national agencies. PALS, is a confidential service.

**Royal Shrewsbury Hospital**, Tel: 0800 783 0057 or 01743 261691

**Princess Royal Hospital**, Tel: 01952 282888

## Other Sources of Information

- **NHS 111**  
A fast and easy way to get the right help, whatever the time. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year.  
Telephone: 111 (free from a landline or mobile)  
Website: [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)
- **Patient UK**  
Provides leaflets on health and disease translated into 11 other languages as well as links to national support/self help groups and a directory of UK health websites.  
Website: [www.patient.info](http://www.patient.info)
- **Self-Help UK**  
This is a directory of self-help groups and charities.  
Website: [www.selfhelp.org.uk](http://www.selfhelp.org.uk)

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## Pandemic Influenza (Flu)



Pandemic flu is a type of influenza that spreads rapidly to affect a number of countries and regions around the world.

## Key facts

- Unlike the 'seasonal flu that occurs every winter in the UK, pandemic flu can occur at any time of year.
- Pandemic influenza has occurred sporadically throughout history – four times in the last hundred years – resulting in many deaths.
- Experts predict another pandemic will occur but cannot say exactly when it will happen. When it does, it may come in two or more waves several months apart. Each wave may last two to three months.
- Pandemic flu can be more serious than seasonal flu with a recent prediction of up to 50% of the population experiencing some level of flu-like symptoms.
- Pandemic flu is likely to cause the same symptoms as seasonal flu. The symptoms may be more severe because nobody will have any immunity or protection against that particular virus.
- A serious pandemic is likely to cause many deaths, disrupt the daily life of many people and cause intense pressure on health and other services.
- Each pandemic is different, and until the virus starts circulating, it is impossible to predict its full effects.

## What is it caused by?

Pandemic flu strikes as a result of a new flu virus which is markedly different from recently circulating strains. Most people have no resistance to this virus and this may cause a more prolonged and serious illness.

## Is there a vaccine to protect against pandemic flu?

Medicines called antivirals can be used to **treat** pandemic flu but their effectiveness won't be known until the pandemic virus is circulating.

There is no vaccine ready to **protect** against pandemic flu. A vaccine to protect against pandemic flu cannot be made until the new virus has been identified and may take up to 6-months to develop. Before a pandemic starts it is difficult to predict what strain will cause it and even then, predictions may prove wrong. Also, the new virus may have changed enough for a pre-prepared vaccine to be ineffective.

Seasonal flu vaccines will not protect against pandemic flu. But seasonal flu can be serious so it is very important that everyone who is due an 'ordinary' flu jab has one.

## What can I do?

You can reduce, but not eliminate, the risk of catching or spreading influenza during a pandemic by:

- Covering your nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing, using a tissue when possible
- Disposing of dirty tissues promptly and carefully – bag and bin them
- Avoiding non-essential travel and large crowds whenever possible
- Maintaining good basic hygiene, for example washing your hands frequently (at least 10 times per day) with soap and water to reduce the spread of the virus from your hands to your face, or to other people.
- Cleaning hard surfaces (e.g. kitchen worktops, door handles) frequently, using a normal cleaning product
- Making sure your children follow this advice.