
NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Health

TRANSLATED PANDEMIC RESOURCES HELP CITIZENS PREPARE

VICTORIA – Individuals, communities and organizations in B.C. now have access to more information in Chinese, Punjabi, Vietnamese, Spanish and French to help them prepare for an influenza (flu) pandemic, announced Health Minister George Abbott.

The Province has translated an emergency preparedness kit, a list of the top 20 ways to prepare for a pandemic, a hand-washing with soap and water poster, and steps to protect your health from influenza poster into these five languages. The new translations are in addition to those already available on the site – the What is a Pandemic?, Self-Care During a Pandemic, and Staying Healthy During a Pandemic BC HealthFiles.

“We know that public education about flu, and measures to lower the risk of getting flu, are key to helping British Columbians prepare not only for a potential pandemic but also for the annual flu season,” said Abbott. “These materials are available on the Province’s pandemic influenza and Provincial Health Officer’s websites, and can be easily printed for posting in businesses, offices, schools, restaurants, community centres and other public venues.”

“Given the diversity in British Columbia, it is important that all communities have the information they need in the event of a pandemic,” said Wally Oppal, Attorney General and Minister Responsible for Multiculturalism. “I am proud that we have undertaken this initiative to enhance public health and safety.”

Other language groups can access translated health information in over 130 languages through the BC NurseLine, a 24-hour health information line available seven days a week and staffed by registered nurses. Pharmacists are also available at BC NurseLine to answer questions about medications from 5 p.m. to 9 a.m. every day.

An influenza pandemic is an outbreak of this illness that occurs all over the world at the same time. It is caused by an influenza virus that changes radically, becomes able to spread easily from person to person, and to which people have little or no immunity. Historically, these events have occurred every 10 to 40 years over the last 400 years, with the last in 1968. Experts are predicting the world may see another soon.

British Columbia has been working to prepare for an influenza pandemic for over five years. This work includes co-ordination with provincial, national and international partners, meetings with emergency responders, municipalities, businesses and other stakeholders, and advance purchasing of medical supplies. Guidelines have also been developed to help local governments, businesses, industry and commerce in their planning, since they will play a key role in helping to mitigate the impacts of a pandemic.

Materials and more information on pandemic influenza can be found at www.health.gov.bc.ca/pandemic , or on annual influenza at www.health.gov.bc.ca/pho/influenza.html. The BC NurseLine can be contacted by calling 604-215-4700 in Greater Vancouver, toll-free at 1-866-215-4700 and for the deaf or hearing impaired 1-866-889-4700, or visit the BC HealthGuide Online at www.bchealthguide.org/

Media Marisa Adair
contact: Communications Director
 250 952-1887

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