



INFORMATION

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THE PUBLIC HEALTH AGENCY OF CANADA'S PANDEMIC PREPAREDNESS ACTIVITIES

The Public Health Agency of Canada, together with federal government departments and provincial and territorial governments, has taken and continues to take action in a number of areas to protect Canadians from a possible influenza (flu) pandemic. Activities include:

- Maintaining the **Canadian Pandemic Influenza Plan**. The plan maps out how Canada will prepare for and respond to pandemic influenza. The Agency continues to work on the plan based on new information that comes available. The plan also provides a model for responding to other infectious disease outbreaks.
- Establishing a contract for **pandemic vaccine production**. The World Health Organization (WHO) has recognized Canada as a leader in pandemic preparedness and as one of the few countries to put in place a domestic contract for pandemic influenza vaccine production.
- Developing and testing a **prototype vaccine** against the H5N1 influenza strain to speed up the availability of a pandemic vaccine when it is needed.
- Creating a **national antiviral stockpile** for use against an influenza pandemic. The stockpile will be used to treat identified priority groups agreed upon by a national expert committee.
- Managing the **National Emergency Stockpile System (NESS)**. NESS contains everything that you would expect to find in a hospital, from beds and blankets to a supply of pharmaceuticals. This includes a stockpile of antiviral medication.
- Providing **international leadership on pandemic preparedness**. For instance, Canada is collaborating with the WHO and other countries and is co-leading, with the United Kingdom, discussions related to the supply and use of antivirals within the Global Health Security Action Group (which comprises the G7 countries and Mexico).
- Helping countries affected by H5N1 influenza **to develop their capacity to respond** to an emerging infectious disease outbreak. The Agency's National Microbiology Laboratory (NML) has been working with Vietnam's National Institute of Hygiene and Epidemiology (NIHE), at its main laboratory in Hanoi, to improve its avian influenza testing capability. Agency staff have also provided field assistance in several countries in Southeast Asia.
- Conducting **research to advance the global response to pandemic influenza**. The NML has been working to increase its vaccine development capacity and contribute to knowledge on pandemic influenza and what makes some influenza strains particularly deadly. It has also been developing its ability to create a seed strain for a vaccine, utilizing the **reverse genetics** technique. This will ensure that Canada is able to develop an influenza vaccine as rapidly as possible once a pandemic strain emerges.
- Managing a **real-time alert system for serious respiratory illnesses (SRIs)**, including severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), to ensure timely dissemination of information to the provinces and territories.
- Strengthening **ongoing year-round surveillance** for influenza through the national FluWatch system.

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- Strengthening linkages with animal influenza surveillance activities to **improve Canada’s ability for early detection of novel flu virus** that can infect humans.
- Putting in place a **hospital-based surveillance system** to detect cases and clusters of severe or emerging respiratory infections, and to effectively prevent and contain their spread in acute care facilities.
- Monitoring the global situation and verifying information received from the **Global Public Health Information Network** (GPHIN) alert system. GPHIN tracks thousands of media stories on public health issues and allows the Agency to quickly identify and monitor cases of severe respiratory infections around the world.
- Ongoing support and maintenance of **quarantine services** at the Toronto, Vancouver, Montréal (Pierre Elliot Trudeau), Calgary, Edmonton, Halifax and Ottawa international airports. Quarantine officers provide health assessments of international travellers who have signs of illness.
- Increasing **public awareness of influenza** and influenza virus through collaboration with the Canadian Public Health Association and the Canadian Coalition for Influenza Awareness & Promotion (Canadian Immunization Awareness Program).