

# Avian and Pandemic Influenza School Emergency Management Planning



## School Emergency Management planning

Schools are required to have emergency management plans. Emergency Management plans must be reviewed and updated on a regular basis (yearly or every two years). The school emergency management planning guide - *"Managing School Emergencies, Minimising the impact of trauma on staff and students"*<sup>1</sup> can assist in the development of such a plan.

It is appropriate to review existing plans in light of newly identified threats to your school community. One such threat that has emerged in the past few years is the threat of biological agents that can occur either naturally or be part of bio-terrorism.

Planning for such hazards is an important part of 'being prepared' and 'mitigating risk'.

The following information is designed to assist schools in the development of plans that may need to be activated in the event of a pandemic. The 'World Health Organisation', The Australian Government, as well as The Victorian Department of Human Services - Communicable Diseases Branch have all developed and updated plans for such events. Links to their web sites are listed. Information provided is considered correct at the time of publication.

## Avian and Pandemic Influenza School Planning

Everyone is responsible for knowing about avian and pandemic influenza and for protecting themselves and others from infection. Every school sickbay/medical facility should have a management plan for avian and pandemic influenza and have infection management control strategies to be followed in suspected cases of pandemic influenza. This workbook is intended to provide a starting point for staff and schools to begin familiarizing themselves with pandemic influenza and to facilitate the development of a school emergency management strategy should pandemic influenza occur in Victoria.

An influenza pandemic is a real threat which requires planning and preparation. While pandemic influenza may not eventuate, we can be prepared by having thought about the issues before hand and in identifying key issues for the school context before needing to initiate response strategies.

What you should know **now**:

- The Australian Government and the Victorian Government have developed plans for the prevention and containment of avian influenza and pandemic influenza within Australia as well as planning for the public health management of pandemic influenza as it affects Australian citizens both within Australia and offshore
- Schools should plan for the prevention and management of pandemic within the school population as part of wider emergency management planning

- This information is a guide to assist Independent Schools Victoria Member Schools in preparing for a pandemic and in mitigating the risk of pandemic on their school community and business

When planning for a pandemic, it is useful to identify a person who will be responsible for coordinating the school planning and response for pandemic influenza. Because there is a chance that pandemic may last for a long period of time (each wave may be of 8 weeks duration) a second person should be identified as a back up and as part of the contingency planning strategies.

It is important that staff know of the symptoms and signs of pandemic and avian influenza.

<b>Symptom</b>	<b>Influenza</b>	<b>Avian Influenza</b>
<b>Fever</b>	Usual, sudden onset 38° C or higher, lasts 3-4 days	Fever greater than 38°C such as viral pneumonia Diarrhoea
<b>Headache</b>	Usual and can be severe	Present in some and severe, Encephalopathy
<b>Bodily aches and pains</b>	Usual and can be severe	
<b>Fatigue and weakness</b>	Usual, can be experienced after other symptoms have remitted	Usual, experience of extreme lethargy
<b>Nausea and vomiting and diarrhoea</b>	In children under 5 years	Sometimes, evident in children
<b>Sore throat</b>	Usual	
<b>Congestion in chest/tightness</b>	Usual	Severe respiratory illness
	Secondary infections of pneumonia, meningitis and ear/sinus infections may develop	Some cases have not had symptoms of respiratory illness but rather have shown symptoms of lethargy, fever and diarrhoea

Information on the clinical signs and symptoms are referred to in the resource material. Further information can be gained from the following websites:

- [www.health.gov.au](http://www.health.gov.au)
- [www.health.vic.gov.au](http://www.health.vic.gov.au)
- [www.who.int/csr/disease/avian\\_influenza/en/](http://www.who.int/csr/disease/avian_influenza/en/)

Everyone must be aware of the risk of pandemic and avian influenza and take precautions against spreading the disease. Pandemic influenza is likely to have a high mortality rate and previous pandemics have indicated that children are susceptible to influenza and have high transmission rates of influenza type viruses.

## Pandemic Influenza – Contacts and Websites Important Telephone Numbers

- Commonwealth Department of Health & Ageing (DoHA)  
Public Enquiry Line 8.30 am – 5.00 pm  
Recorded Message after Hours  
1800 004 591
- Communicable Diseases Section Department of Human Services  
1300 651 160 (Business hours)  
132 222 Pager no. 46870 (After hours)

## Useful Websites

- Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing (DoHA)  
[www.health.gov.au](http://www.health.gov.au)
- Interim Protocol for public health management of possible/confirmed cases of avian influenza  
[www.health.gov.au](http://www.health.gov.au)
- World Health Organisation  
Interim infection guidelines for health care facilities  
[www.wpro.who.int/avian](http://www.wpro.who.int/avian)
- Department of Human Services (DHS) Victoria  
[www.health.vic.gov.au/ideas/diseases/avian.htm](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/ideas/diseases/avian.htm)
- Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade- travel advice and recommendations  
[www.smartraveller.gov.au](http://www.smartraveller.gov.au)  
[www.dfat.gov.au](http://www.dfat.gov.au)
- Emergency Management Manual Victoria  
[www.justice.vic.gov.au](http://www.justice.vic.gov.au)
- Department of Human Services  
[www.dhs.vic.gov.au/emergency](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/emergency)
- The Victorian Influenza Pandemic Plan  
[www.health.vic.gov.au](http://www.health.vic.gov.au)

## Putting in place control measures at school

### Prevention

1. Encourage seasonal influenza vaccination for all people at risk. Immunisation with seasonal influenza medication will prevent serious morbidity from co-infection with a new influenza virus.
  - Travellers
  - Health care workers
  - Individuals over 65 or older

- Those with chronic illnesses/ medical conditions (including asthma).
2. Encourage pneumococcal vaccination for those 65 years and over or with chronic medical conditions
  3. Standard hygiene practices such as covering nose and mouth whilst coughing, sneezing, washing hands after blowing nose should be encouraged amongst school population

## General Infection Control

Practical steps to help protect staff and students from influenza are:

- Regular hand washing using soap and thorough drying of hands after washing
- Covering mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing
- Disposal of used tissues in a bin
- Avoiding contact with others, if sick, to reduce the risk of passing the infection on
- If possible stand 1 metre away or to the side of a coughing/sneezing person
- Surfaces such as door handles, reception counters, counter tops, tables etc, should be cleaned with soap and water regularly as the influenza virus can survive for 24 hours on inanimate surfaces
- Staff and students with respiratory illnesses should not attend work or school while symptomatic
- Consider putting up posters with cough etiquette and hygiene tips in the staffroom and around the school, use your school newsletter to educate parents
- Deter spitting

## Screening

Screening tools can be developed by following key questions recommended by The Department of Human Services. Key questions include:

- Check travel history of patients with fever or influenza like symptoms
- A high index of suspicion is gained if:
  - There has been contact with confirmed cases
  - Returning travellers have had contact with poultry, poultry farms or products
  - Returned traveller has had contact with a person who had a severe respiratory illness
  - Returned traveller has had contact with Laboratory workers handling suspected avian influenza or is such a worker
  - Clusters of illness are evident in health care workers, farm workers or others

Some schools with students and staff that are travelling to and returning from countries identified as having confirmed cases of avian influenza may wish their medical staff to screen individuals before they recommence at school. A simple questionnaire will allow such professionals to identify those who may be at risk before they re-enter the school community.

Each school will need to develop a clinical management plan for the management of suspected cases of pandemic influenza. It is recommended that school medical staff be familiar with the guidelines described by the World Health Organization Website for infection control guidelines:

[www.who.int/csr/disease/avian\\_influenza/guidelines/infectioncontrol1/en/](http://www.who.int/csr/disease/avian_influenza/guidelines/infectioncontrol1/en/)

If a pandemic influenza outbreak occurs in Victoria, Health Officials will advise of the procedures to be followed.

Schools that provide boarding facilities and medical centres may be required to implement initial infection control procedures and to develop a triage plan, especially for those schools that may have staff and students returning from avian affected countries overseas.

**The Victorian Department of Human Services telephone number for emergency advise on pandemic health issues is 1300 650172**