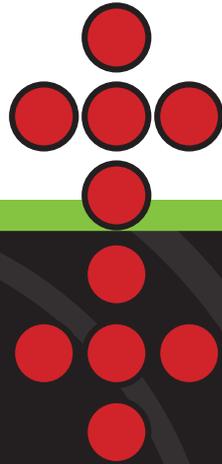


# Emotional Well-Being during Pandemic Flu



## **WORKING TOGETHER**

“More than anything else, we want everyone in the Kane County community to know that there are support systems available to assist them in the event of pandemic flu. We believe that by working together, our agencies and the community are prepared to deal with any emergency.”

Kane County Mental Health Council

Stay Calm.  
Have a Plan.

*Pandemic flu is a global outbreak that occurs when a new influenza virus appears, and many people have little or no immunity. It affects people of all ages and backgrounds.*

*In this pamphlet is information that can help you prepare for a pandemic flu situation; will help you understand your reactions, and offers suggestions on how to maintain a positive mental health outlook.*

## Maintain A Positive Outlook:

- Limit your exposure to graphic news stories
- Get accurate, timely information from reliable sources
- Focus on positive things. Structure fun and/or absorbing activities into your day, such as exercise, reading, writing, organizing... and calling your friends.
- Maintain your normal daily routine, if possible
- Exercise, eat well and rest
- Find comfort in your spiritual and personal beliefs
- Keep a sense of humor
- Share your concerns with others

## What Might Happen

If there is pandemic flu, measures like these can slow the flu from spreading: large gatherings may be cancelled, schools dismissed and business hours may be shortened. Workers may stay at home and use computers and telephones to continue their jobs. People with the flu, and their family, may be asked to stay home.

You may need to reorganize your life to care for loved ones or to receive care. You may lose income if your workplace closes or you become ill. School closures can result in the need for home-schooling or other activities for homebound children. Access to food and other household goods may become limited.

## Preparation

Federal, State, and local health agencies are making plans to prepare for, respond to, and contain an outbreak of pandemic flu. Research into disaster preparation shows that having a family emergency plan, and a family emergency kit, is a significant help, while also providing peace of mind. We encourage communities, businesses, organizations, families and individuals to plan for a pandemic influenza outbreak.

## Get Reliable Information

When you face uncertainty during pandemic flu, it is important to keep things in perspective. Get information you can trust from the Kane County Health Department's website at

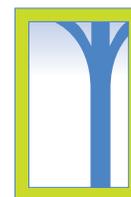
<http://www.kanehealth.com>

It has in-depth information on health practices you can use to help prevent the flu from spreading. You can also call the department at 630-208-3801.

For some people, the symptoms and disturbing reactions to pandemic flu do not go away. This can lead to withdrawing from friends and family, or avoiding activities that are empowering. Consider seeking help if important areas of your life, such as relationships, work, or school, are being affected.

## Where to Go For help

People considering professional support should select someone who is knowledgeable about the stress of a pandemic event. For more information on resources in Kane County, please call:



**KANE COUNTY  
MENTAL HEALTH COUNCIL**

*making a difference ...together*

Northern Kane County: 847-697-2380

Southern Kane County: 630-966-9393



# Stay Calm. Have a Plan.

## A Family Plan

Here are some suggestions for preparing a family emergency plan and kit. Use this list as a starting point, and then customize it to your family's needs.

If you have children or are responsible for caring for elderly relatives, make alternative care plans. Schools as well as child and elderly day care providers may be closed.

Make a list of helpful email addresses and phone numbers: schools, doctors, etc. Be prepared to ask your doctor and insurance company if you can get an extra supply of your family's regular prescription drugs.

Talk with family members and loved ones not living in your home about how they would be cared for if they got sick or what will be needed to care for them

Store a supply of water, food, and medical supplies. If you have the flu, you'll be able to stay home and limit your contact with others. If you're healthy, it'll be comforting to have these items on hand to limit your outdoor activity. There isn't an established time line to determine the amount of each item to have stored.

A good starting point would be two weeks.

## Food and Non-Perishables

- Ready-to-eat canned meats, tuna, fruits, vegetables and soups
- Protein or fruit bars
- Dry cereal or granola
- Dried fruit
- Bottled water
- Crackers
- Canned juices
- Canned or jarred baby food and formula
- Pet food
- Games such as crossword puzzles, a deck of cards, board games, etc.

## Medical, Health and Emergency Supplies

- Prescribed medical supplies such as glucose and blood pressure monitoring equipment
- Prescribed psychotropics
- Soap and water or alcohol-based hand wash
- Medicines for fever such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen
- Thermometer
- Anti-diarrhea medication
- Vitamins
- Fluids with electrolytes
- Cleansing agents/soap
- Flashlight
- Batteries
- Portable radio
- Manual can opener

## Psychological First Aid

Through family emergency planning, staying calm, and focusing on the well-being of others in the community, you can be confident normalcy will return to your life. Here are additional tips for managing the stress brought on by pandemic flu:

### Children

- Involve the child in preparation of the family emergency kit
- Provide predictable bedtime routines
- Avoid unnecessary separations
- Monitor media exposure to disaster trauma
- Encourage expression through play activities
- Give additional attention and consideration
- Provide structured but undemanding home chores and activities
- Encourage verbal and play expression of thoughts and feelings
- Encourage expression regarding losses

### Teens

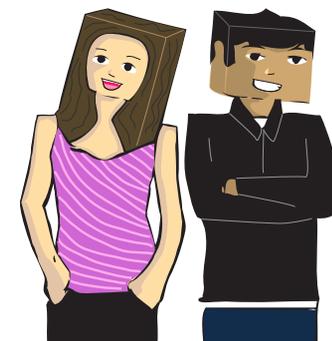
- Encourage discussion of their pandemic flu experiences with peers and adults
- Avoid insistence on discussion of feelings with parents
- Encourage indoor physical activities
- Rehearse family safety measures
- Encourage communication with friends via phone, email, and text messaging

### Older Adults

- Provide listening and an opportunity to talk in detail about pandemic flu experiences
- Assist with prioritizing and problem solving
- Provide information on pandemic flu stress and coping
- Provide orienting information
- Assist in re-establishing social contacts
- Encourage discussion of pandemic losses and expression of emotions
- Engage providers of transportation, meal programs, and home visits as needed

### Most Important: You

During and after pandemic flu, your normal routines will be altered. Do your best to adjust and move on. It is important to maintain structure in your life. It is also important to pay attention to your own feelings and to take care of your own emotional needs. You are then better able to help friends and family members handle their concerns.



# Emotional Well-Being during Pandemic Flu

## 4 areas of personal well being that can be affected

Listed here are normal reactions to the abnormal situation of pandemic flu. Your awareness of them will increase your ability to cope.

### Physical

When under stress over time, our bodies react. Be alert to whether these symptoms have changed noticeably from the way you felt before. Be sure to see a doctor about any significant changes as many stress reactions mimic major physical disorders and diseases.

- ▶ *Headaches, tiredness, increased pulse, high blood pressure, changes in appetite, unexplained aches or pains, trouble sleeping, sleeping too much, stomach aches.*

### Emotional

Often our emotional reactions are the most confusing. We may laugh unexpectedly or yell in anger. We may feel irritable and grumpy. We also may feel intense fear or have unexplained sadness and crying. Always remember that all emotions are normal.

- ▶ *Panic, anxiety, distrust, fear, anger, irritability, sadness, depression, blame, feeling overwhelmed, increased stress.*

### Mental

The stress of pandemic flu may affect your ability to think clearly, and make it harder to pay attention, solve problems or remember. It does not mean that you are "crazy" or "losing your mind." These are normal reactions in times of high stress. They are signals to you to take action and care for yourself.

- ▶ *Trouble concentrating, problems at work or school, memory problems, troubling thoughts, concern about health issues.*

### Behavioral

Some people burn "anxious energy" by pacing, fidgeting and other nervous habits. But some behaviors triggered by stressful events need to be stopped as they tend to make the situation worse. These things include increased smoking and drinking, blaming others, yelling, swearing, hitting and throwing things. Unfortunately, it is often the people that we love the most are the targets of these behaviors. If others are in danger due to your stress reactions, please seek professional help.

- ▶ *Withdrawal, substance abuse, aggression .*

If these reactions occur, contact your personal physician or mental health provider. If you are currently seeing a physician, or if you have an existing psychological illness, you may experience an increase in symptoms. Find out how services will be provided during pandemic flu, and consider or discuss how you might get needed support or assistance from family and friends.

## Friends Make A Difference

There are many available options for maintaining a positive mental health outlook. If you are anxious, talk to someone who can help. This may be your doctor, a family member, friend, clergy member, teacher or mental health professional.

If you know someone who has the flu, reach out to them. Make some time to talk and help mitigate any guilt they may be feeling about the stress in their life. Watching out for others shows you care. It can be comforting and calming to both of you.

If you or someone you know is having a hard time managing their emotions, plan a regular "sunshine" call to raise their spirits.

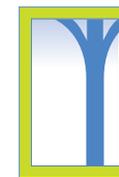
If anyone in your family has a pre-existing condition, call them to make certain they are doing okay.

Even if you need to stay at home, keep in touch with all the people you know – family, friends, neighbors, from school, from your faith community, co-workers – by phone and email.



## Cooperation

During a pandemic flu situation, you may be asked to adjust your daily routine to accommodate the response by city, county, and state officials. Your cooperation and acceptance of restrictions will reduce your stress while helping others get their work completed.



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