

The Government of Canada and Expectations about the Next Pandemic

Why do scientists expect that another pandemic will occur in the next 5 to 10 years?

This expectation is based on the historical patterns of the disease. The average time elapsed between each of the last four pandemics has been 25 years; however, the range has varied between 11 and 39 years, with the most recent pandemics occurring in 1968, 1957, 1918. It has been 34 years since the last pandemic.

What can we do to prevent a pandemic from occurring?

With our current scientific knowledge, there is no way to prevent a pandemic from occurring. But there are ways to lessen the impact that a pandemic would have, specifically to decrease the number of deaths, and control its impact on health care resources.

A global network of laboratories and surveillance systems coordinated by the World Health Organization is keeping a watchful eye for new influenza strains.

What would happen in Canada during a pandemic?

Based on our knowledge of the two most recent pandemics, experts believe that pandemic influenza virus could reach Canada within 3 months of being detected anywhere in the world, and would have its maximum effect on the Canadian population within 5-7 months. Using information from the last three pandemics and a disease model developed by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Health Canada estimates a pandemic could potentially result in between 9000 and 51,000 deaths in Canada if a vaccine was not available. A severe shortage of hospital beds could also occur.

What can be done in Canada to prevent a pandemic from occurring?

When the pandemic strain emerges, international surveillance will provide Canada with an early warning, in order for us to start vaccine production as quickly as possible.

Immunization will be used to minimize the impact of the pandemic on Canadians.

Health Canada continues to work with provincial and territorial governments to finalize a contingency plan which would provide the basis for coordinated and collaborative action by the provinces, Health Canada and other federal agencies in the event of a pandemic.

In 2001, Health Canada finalized a pandemic vaccine contract which will enable vaccine to be made available to all Canadians at the time of a pandemic.

From: <http://www.immunize.cpha.ca/en/specific-groups/childactivities/influenza/epi.aspx>