
Pandemic Influenza Risk Management

WHO Interim Guidance



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Abbreviations

CAR	Clinical attack rate
CFR	Case-fatality ratio
ERMH	Emergency Risk Management for Health
GAP	Global Action Plan for Influenza Vaccines
GISRS	Global Influenza Surveillance and Response System
GOARN	Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network
IHR (2005)	International Health Regulations (2005)
PHEIC	Public Health Emergency of International Concern
PIP Framework	Pandemic Influenza Preparedness Framework for the sharing of influenza viruses and access to vaccines and other benefits
SAGE	Strategic Advisory Group of Experts on Immunization
UN	United Nations

Executive summary

Influenza pandemics are unpredictable but recurring events that can have consequences on human health and economic well-being worldwide. Advance planning and preparedness are critical to help mitigate the impact of a pandemic. This WHO guidance document, *Pandemic Influenza Risk Management*, updates and replaces *Pandemic influenza preparedness and response: a WHO guidance document*, which was published in 2009. This revision of the guidance takes account of lessons learnt from the influenza A(H1N1) 2009 pandemic and of other relevant developments.

The influenza A(H1N1) 2009 pandemic was both the first of the 21st century and the first since WHO had produced pandemic preparedness guidance. The experience of Member States during the pandemic varied, yet several common factors emerged. Member States had prepared for a pandemic of high severity and appeared unable to adapt their national and subnational responses adequately to a more moderate event. Communications were also demonstrated to be of immense importance: the need to provide clear risk assessments to decision-makers placed significant strain on ministries of health; and effective communication with the public was challenging. These, and other areas with improvement potential, were identified by the Review Committee on the Functioning of the International Health Regulations (2005) in relation to Pandemic (H1N1) 2009.

The influenza A(H1N1) 2009 pandemic provided a wealth of additional information to the established and growing body of knowledge on influenza viruses at the human–animal ecosystem interface. Other notable developments since the publication of the 2009 guidance include the adoption by the Sixty-fourth World Health Assembly of the Pandemic Influenza Preparedness Framework for the sharing of influenza viruses and access to vaccines and other benefits. In addition, risk management of acute public health events that have the potential to cross borders and threaten people worldwide continues to improve as a result of the International Health Regulations (2005) and States Parties' obligations on capacity strengthening.

This guidance can be used to inform and harmonize national and international pandemic preparedness and response. Countries should consider reviewing and/or updating national influenza preparedness and response plans to reflect the approach taken in this guidance. The roles and responsibilities of WHO relevant to pandemic preparedness, in terms of global leadership and support to Member States, are also articulated. This document is not intended to replace national plans, which should be developed by each country.

New in the 2013 guidance

Emergency Risk Management for Health

The approach taken in this 2013 guidance applies the principles of all-hazards emergency risk management for health (ERMH) to pandemic influenza risk management. The objectives of emergency risk management for health are to: strengthen capacities to manage the health risks from all hazards; embed comprehensive emergency risk management in the health sector; and enable and promote multisectoral linkage and integration across the whole-of-government and the whole-of-society. This guidance therefore aligns more closely with the disaster risk management structures already in place in many countries and underscores the need for appropriate and timely risk assessment for evidence-based decision-making at national, subnational and local levels.

Risk-based approach

This guidance introduces a risk-based approach to pandemic influenza risk management and encourages Member States to develop flexible plans, based on national risk assessment, taking account of the global risk assessment conducted by WHO. To support implementation, content on the application of assessments of risk and severity have been strengthened.

Approach to global phases and uncoupling global phases from national actions

In response to lessons learnt from the influenza A(H1N1) 2009 pandemic, a revised approach to global phases is introduced in this guidance. The phases, which are based on virological, epidemiological and clinical data, are to be used for describing the spread of a new influenza subtype, taking account of the disease it causes, around the world. The global phases have been clearly uncoupled from risk management decisions and actions at the country level. Thus, Member States are encouraged as far as possible to use national risk assessments to inform management decisions for the benefit of their country's specific situation and needs.

PIP Framework

The Pandemic Influenza Preparedness Framework for the sharing of influenza viruses and access to vaccines and other benefits, commonly known as the PIP Framework, brings together Member States, industry, other stakeholders and WHO to implement a global approach to pandemic influenza preparedness and response. Its key goals include:

- to improve and strengthen the sharing of influenza viruses with human pandemic potential; and
- to achieve, *inter alia*, more predictable, efficient and equitable access for countries in need of life-saving vaccines and medicines during future pandemics.

The Framework was developed by Member States and became effective on 24 May 2011, when it was adopted by the Sixty-fourth World Health Assembly.

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