

## Personal pandemic preparedness

**Bird flu is currently an animal disease and only infects humans in isolated cases. It is impossible to predict if and when the avian flu virus now circulating will mutate into a pandemic virus. The course of any future flu pandemic cannot be predicted, either. So there is absolutely no reason for excessive concern. Still, it is better to be on the safe side than taken unaware by a possibly serious pandemic.**

**Information:** sound information is decisive, both to prepare for a pandemic, and if one actually breaks out.

⇒ Find out what arrangements and recommendations your local authorities have made. Regularly visit the websites of the Swiss Federal Office for Public Health ([www.bag.admin.ch](http://www.bag.admin.ch)) and of the World Health Organization ([www.who.int](http://www.who.int)). Inquire what preparations your employer is making for a pandemic. You can find further useful information at [www.fluwikie.com](http://www.fluwikie.com) > Personal Preparedness, and elsewhere.

**Tamiflu®:** Tamiflu® is currently considered the medicine of choice against the future pandemic virus (there is also Relenza®, a medicine which has to be inhaled). Tamiflu® can be kept for five years from production date. In case of a pandemic, it should be taken, after prescription by a doctor, as soon as possible (36-48 hours at most) after emergence of the first symptoms of the illness.

⇒ If you live in a country which has insufficient provision for a pandemic, and have the opportunity to buy Tamiflu® privately from a reliable source, do so - but strictly observe the instructions of your doctor when taking it having come down with flu!

**Travel documents:** if you live in a country with insufficient medical provision, you may be thinking of returning to Switzerland if a pandemic breaks out, if and while this is possible.

⇒ Make sure your travel papers are always valid, and plan ahead!

Up to 25% of the population might succumb to the entire first wave of a pandemic. If the pandemic is severe many employees might not go to work, fearing infection. Public transport may come to a halt, and consignments of goods become difficult or impossible. This may have serious consequences in many areas.

**Emergency provisions:** shops may sell out and only be restocked after long delays. During a pandemic, you will want to leave the house as little as possible.

⇒ Build up an emergency food stock, at least for the duration of a flu attack, i.e. two weeks, and possibly for the whole length of an initial wave of flu, i.e. up to eight weeks! You might need a back-up cooking appliance, too. For what to buy, see, for example [www.bwl.admin.ch](http://www.bwl.admin.ch) > Topics > Household reserves.

**Protective equipment:** many countries may experience shortages of protective masks in case of pandemic. Although the protective effect of these masks is unproven, they may offer a degree of safety in contact with others, and prevent you from infecting other people. Regular hand washing is one of the most important means of protection. If you are in close contact with infected persons, it may be advisable to wear goggles and disposable gloves as well.

⇒ Consider buying a sufficient quantity of protective masks (surgical masks type II R as per European Standard prEN14683)!

**Electricity supply:** there may be power cuts for longer periods during a pandemic.

⇒ Build up a reserve of candles, matches, batteries for torches and radio etc. If you rely on certain electrical appliances, install a back-up power source!

**Water supply:** the mains water supply may at times be interrupted or contaminated.

⇒ Keep a reserve of drinking water! If you can collect rainwater, you can drink this too after boiling it for between five minutes (at sea level) and 20 minutes (at an altitude of 4000 metres).

**Money:** your company may suspend wage payments. Your bank may not be working, and cash dispensers out of order.

⇒ Keep reasonable reserves of cash in a safe place!

**Heating:** gas and electricity supplies may be interrupted at times. Fuel deliveries (heating oil and firewood) may also be disrupted

⇒ If you have gas or electric heating or are connected to a district heating system, arrange back-up heating. Make sure you always have sufficient stocks of fuel.

**N.B: these recommendations are purely precautionary. At present there are no signs of a pandemic being imminent. This instruction sheet should be understood as supplementing the general emergency arrangements and the instruction sheets concerning them.**