

Preparing for a Severe Influenza Pandemic: A focus on food and medication

When an influenza (“flu”) virus spreads easily from person to person, and spreads quickly around the world, it is called an influenza pandemic. The current H1N1 pandemic is classified as “moderate”, which means most people who get ill with the virus will recover at home, without the need for medical care.

As the current H1N1 pandemic is one of moderate severity, it does not and will not necessarily require the preparations that are suggested in this resource.

If B.C. was faced with a “severe” pandemic, emergency measures may be needed to stop the spread of infection. Schools and other public buildings may be closed, and you may be advised to stay at home. If this happens, you may not be able to buy any food and medication.

To prepare for a more severe influenza pandemic, the Canadian Red Cross recommends that each household have a 7-10 day supply of food and medication for each person living there. This is longer than the 72 hour supply that is recommended for other emergencies (such as earthquakes or floods). Unlike other emergencies, however, you do not have to plan for possible power outages or an unsafe water supply.

Steps You Can Take

Food

[Eating Well with Canada’s Food Guide](#) shows you how much food is recommended for each person from each food group each day. Consider each person’s age and gender. For example, one family with one man, one woman, one child of either gender and one teenage boy would need at least the following every day:

Daily Servings of Food Recommended for a Family of Four Using Canada’s Food Guide:

Daily Food Guide Servings per person	Man	Woman	Teenage boy	Child	Total for this family for 1 day
Vegetables and Fruit (servings)	8*-10	7*-8	8	5	28
Grain Products (servings)	8	6*-7	7	4	25
Milk and Alternatives (servings)	2	2	3*-4	2	10
Meat and Alternatives (servings)	3	2	3	1	9

* Amount used

The tables that follow show you approximately how much food this family would need for 7 days.

Vegetables and Fruit

The minimum number of vegetable and fruit servings for a family of four for 7 days is 196. This is calculated by taking the number of servings needed for one day (28) and multiplying that by 7.

Food product	Quantity	Number of servings
Fresh vegetables (e.g. broccoli, carrots, parsnips, cucumber, cauliflower*)	1 bunch carrots, 1 head broccoli, 1 cucumber	Approximately 15
Fresh fruit (e.g. apples, oranges, kiwis*)	20 pieces	20
canned vegetables (14oz)	8 cans	24
canned fruits (14oz)	8 cans	24
frozen vegetables (1kg)	2 packages	21
frozen fruits (1kg)	2 packages	25
juice, tetra pack (1L)	3 tetra pack	24
juice, frozen from concentrate (355mL)	3 cans	36
tomato-based pasta sauce (700mL)	2 cans	11
		Total servings: 200

* Examples provided have a minimum storage time of one week.

Grain Products

The minimum number of grain servings for a family of four for 7 days is 175. This is calculated by taking the number of servings needed for one day (25) and multiplying that by 7.

Food product	Quantity	Number of servings
hot cereal (1kg, Quaker Oats™)	1 bag	45
Whole grain cold cereal (525g)	1 box	18
rice (1kg brown, long grain)	1 bag	32
pasta (454g spaghetti noodles)	2 boxes	35
Whole grain bread* (1 sandwich loaf)	2 loaves	32
Whole grain crackers (450g)	1 box	15
		Total servings: 177

* Freeze to extend storage.

Milk and Alternatives

The minimum number of milk & alternative servings for a family of four for 7 days is 63. This is calculated by taking the number of servings needed for one day (9) and multiplying that by 7.

Food product	Quantity	Number of servings
Milk* (4L)	2 containers	32
Yogurt* (650g)	2 containers	7
Cheese* (500g)	1 block	10
evaporated milk (370mL)	2 cans	6
skim milk powder (300g**)	1 bag	13
UHT milk*** (1L) OR shelf stable rice beverage (946mL) OR shelf stable soy beverage (946mL)	2 tetra packs	8
pudding, packaged, ready-to-eat (6x106g)	1 package of 6	6 servings
		Total servings: 82

* Use by best before date.

** Skim milk powder is sold in bags of 1kg or 2kg. It is also available in bulk for purchasing smaller amounts.

*** UHT milk is milk that has been sterilized prior to packaging, so it can be stored for long periods at room temperature, prior to opening.

Meat and Alternatives

The minimum number of meat & alternative servings for a family of four for 7 days is 63. This is calculated by taking the number of servings needed for one day (9) and multiplying that by 7.

Food product	Quantity	Number of servings
fresh meat*	750g	10
fresh fish*	750g	10
fresh poultry*	750g	10
eggs**	1 dozen	6
canned meat and fish (180g, canned tuna)	2 cans	5
dried beans, peas and lentils (500g)	1 bag dried	12
canned beans, lentils (14oz)	2 cans	4
nuts and seeds, trail mix	300g	8
peanut butter, other nut or seed butters (500g)	1 jar	15
		Total servings: 80

* Freeze to extend storage.

** Use by best before date.

Other foods

The following are “comfort foods” that may be appealing when you are sick, extra foods that add variety and flavour, and staples that you will want to have on hand.

- coffee, tea
- foods for when you are sick such as Jell-o™ powder, ginger ale, popsicles, sorbet or ice cream
- cooking oil, margarine
- condiments such as ketchup, jam, salad dressing
- staples such as flour and sugar, baking powder, baking soda, herbs and spices, salt
- plain chicken, beef or vegetable broth
- dried vegetables and fruit
- canned soups and stews

Because the power will be on, food that’s already in your fridge and freezer can be considered part of your emergency food supply. But don’t assume that you will have just been grocery shopping. Use the typical amount of food in your fridge/freezer just *before* you go grocery shopping to help you decide how much extra food you need.

To extend storage time, choose foods that are non-perishable, have longer shelf lives, and those that can be frozen. Check your storage space and plan your grocery list with this in mind. If you choose foods your family normally eats, and refill your supply as you go, you won't have to worry about wasting food.

Include foods that are appealing if a family member becomes sick with the flu. Flu virus symptoms that may affect eating include sore throat and lack of appetite. Some people with the H1N1 flu

virus have also reported nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea.

Think about the special needs of each household member. For example, those with allergies or medical conditions may need to have extra supplies on hand. Babies who are fed with a breast milk substitute will need a supply of infant formula.

Don't forget your pet(s)!

Since your emergency kit provides food for a relatively short time only, you don't have to aim for perfect nutrition.

However, having nutritious meals and snacks will help keep energy levels up and help everyone to feel their best.

Medication and Toiletries

If you have any questions about the use of any of the medications in this list, check with your pharmacist, Nursing Services at 8-1-1, or your doctor.

Make sure you have medication and other supplies to manage both the flu, any existing chronic diseases, and other personal needs. Consider having the following on hand:

Basic pain/fever relievers. Examples are acetaminophen (Tylenol™) or ibuprofen. Acetylsalicylic acid (ASA or Aspirin) should NOT be given to children or teenagers. (If you have children in your home, make sure that you have medication specific for their age.)

Thermometer

Stomach remedies. E.g.

Dimenhydrinate (common name Gravol™) tablets, liquid and/or suppositories, used to treat nausea and vomiting. Loperamide (common name Imodium™) or Pepto Bismol™ can be used to treat diarrhea.

Hot water bottle or heating pad.

Applying heat carefully, for short periods of time, can help reduce muscle pain. Check the skin often when using a heating pad because the pad can cause burns and blisters.

Prescription medications or equipment for any chronic illnesses.

Examples are blood pressure-lowering medication and blood glucose monitoring equipment.

Saline drops or spray or decongestants. These help soothe or clear a stuffed nose.

Cough medicine. For dry cough.

Oral rehydration solution. This is sometimes needed to prevent or correct dehydration with vomiting and/or diarrhea.

Infants and children less than 12 years old: **Pedialyte™**

Adults and children 12 years and older: You can make an inexpensive rehydration drink at home. Do not give

this homemade drink to children younger than 12.

Measure all ingredients precisely. Small variations can make the drink less effective or even harmful. Mix the following:

- 950 mL (1 qt) water
- 2.5 g (½ teaspoon) baking soda
- 2.5 g (½ teaspoon) table salt
- 1.25 g (¼ teaspoon) salt substitute (potassium-based), such as Lite Salt or Morton Salt Substitute
- 30 g (2 tablespoons) sugar

Other supplies:

- infant diapers and wipes
- feminine hygiene products
- toilet paper
- tissues

Other resources

- Public Health Agency of Canada: Pandemic Flu Planning Checklist <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/influenza/fam-pl-ckl-eng.php>
- HealthLink BC: Dehydration Home Treatment <http://www.healthlinkbc.ca/kbase/topic/symptom/dehyd/hometrt.htm>
- Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/index-eng.php>