

Pandemic Response Planning Checklist for Physicians' Offices

In an influenza pandemic, primary care physicians and their office staff will be in the front lines of response. This checklist has been developed to help you plan your response to an influenza pandemic, as it might affect your practice. The checklist is divided into sections that address steps you can take now to prepare and steps you can take during a pandemic to protect yourself, your family, your staff and your patients.

For pandemic planning resources refer to: www.vch.ca/pandemic.

The **Vancouver Coastal Health Pandemic Response Plan** can be found at:
sneezesdiseases.com/resource/vch-regional-pandemic-outbreak-response-plan
Specific chapters of the plan that you may find useful are:

Chapter 4: Infection Control

Chapter 7: Medical Management and Health Care Settings

The Vancouver Coastal Health pandemic self-care guide, "Look after yourself" is available at:
sneezesdiseases.com/resource/pandemic-prep-look-after-yourself.

1. Pre-pandemic/Interpandemic Period

Critical to your response will be your ability to continue to provide services. It is unlikely that a vaccine will be available during a first wave of illness and staff absenteeism may affect your practice. You will need to be prepared professionally and personally to help mitigate the impact of a pandemic. In the pre-pandemic period:

- Confirm that you have adequate, current personal disability insurance.
- Acquaint yourself with current clinical information about the recognition, treatment and prevention of transmission of influenza.
- Educate all staff about pandemic influenza.
- Make plans to ensure your family will be looked after in a pandemic so that you can continue to work.
- Provide annual influenza vaccination to all office staff each fall.
- Provide annual influenza vaccination to all eligible patients each fall.
- Provide one dose of polysaccharide pneumococcal vaccine to all eligible patients (those over 65 and those with chronic health problems).
- Provide conjugate pneumococcal vaccine series to infants.

2. Pre-pandemic and Pandemic Periods

Developing routines now that reinforce good hygiene practices among staff and patients will help prevent the spread of seasonal and pandemic influenzas. In the pre-pandemic and pandemic periods:

- Post signage advising patients to check in with reception upon arrival.
- Separate reception staff from patients with Plexiglas or minimum one metre separation.

Pre-pandemic and Pandemic Periods (cont'd.)

- ❑ Post cough/sneeze etiquette signage in the waiting area.
- ❑ Provide liquid soap and paper towels in patient washrooms and at staff sinks.
- ❑ Provide staff with small bottles of alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- ❑ Wall mount alcohol-based hand sanitizer dispenser at office entrance for patient use upon arrival.
- ❑ Provide disposable tissues and no-touch waste receptacles in waiting area.
- ❑ Provide surgical masks to be worn by patients with influenza-like illness who are coughing or sneezing.
- ❑ Wash or sanitize your hands before and after every patient encounter.
- ❑ Wear a surgical mask when face-to-face with patients with influenza-like illness with cough.
- ❑ Wear a fit-tested N95 respirator when face-to-face with suspected TB patients and patients with emerging pathogens suspected to be transmitted by the airborne route.
- ❑ Wear gowns, gloves and eye protection only as needed to avoid contact with blood or other infectious body fluids.
- ❑ Provide paper sheeting for examination tables and change between patients.
- ❑ Clean and disinfect medical devices, such as stethoscopes, between patients.
- ❑ Clean and disinfect exam rooms and waiting areas daily.
- ❑ Monitor staff illness and make sure that staff with influenza-like illness remain off work.
- ❑ Develop a contingency plan to address staff shortages; consider the use of volunteers.

3. Pandemic Period

Enhanced hygiene practices and social distancing will be important in preventing the spread of pandemic influenza. During a pandemic:

- ❑ Assign a staff member to co-ordinate pandemic planning and to monitor public health advisories.
- ❑ Maintain copies of pandemic educational materials and "Self-Care Guides" for patients (provided by public health).
- ❑ Telephone triage all patient requests for visits.
- ❑ Postpone all inessential visits, such as routine check-ups.
- ❑ If possible, schedule all patients with influenza-like illness during designated time slots.
- ❑ If possible provide a separate entrance and waiting area for patients with influenza-like illness or separate patients with influenza-like illness by one metre from others in the waiting room.

Pandemic Period (cont'd.)

- ❑ Remove all magazines, books and toys from the waiting area.
- ❑ Eliminate or decrease the use of shared items by patients, such as pens, clipboards, phones.
- ❑ Minimize the amount of time spent in the waiting room by patients with influenza-like illness.
- ❑ If possible, designate one exam room for all patients with influenza-like illness.
- ❑ In group practices, consider having one physician see all patients with influenza-like illness.
- ❑ Assign staff who have recovered from pandemic influenza to care for patients with influenza-like illness.
- ❑ Plan for the disposition of all patients with influenza-like illness:
 - Home with "Self-Care Guide"
 - Home with home care
 - Referral to alternate care site
 - Admission to acute care facility
- ❑ When referring patients with influenza-like illness, notify the receiving facility in advance.
- ❑ Clean waiting areas, exam rooms for patients with influenza-like illness and frequently touched surfaces, such as doorknobs, at least twice daily and when visibly soiled.
- ❑ Ensure cleaners avoid vacuuming and dry dusting; "damp" dust only.
- ❑ Maintain at least one week's supply of soap, paper towels, hand sanitizer, cleaning supplies and surgical masks.



Adapted from: "Pandemic Influenza and Physician Offices", Patricia Daly, MD FRCPC, *BCMJ*, in press.