

## **Do you know the difference between seasonal flu, avian flu, and pandemic flu?**

**Seasonal** (or common) flu (influenza ) is a respiratory illness that can be transmitted from person to person. Most people have some immunity and a vaccine is available.

**Avian** (or bird) flu is caused by influenza viruses that occur naturally among wild birds. The H5N1 variant is deadly to domestic fowl, but is not easily transmitted from birds to humans. There is no human immunity and no vaccine is available.

**Pandemic** flu is a virulent human flu that causes a global outbreak, or pandemic, of serious illness. Because there is little natural immunity, the disease can spread easily from person to person. Currently, there is no pandemic flu. Three pandemic flu outbreaks occurred during the 20th century – 1918-1919 “Spanish Flu”; 1956-1958 “Asian Flu”; and 1968-1969 “Hong Kong Flu.”

Like hurricanes, no one can accurately predict when the next pandemic will occur. It is only a matter of time until one does. However, because the world has changed since the last pandemic, advance planning for today’s world environment can help. In the absence of a vaccine, good hygiene, including frequent hand washing, covering your mouth when you cough, and staying home when ill, is the best preventative measure to take.

More information on planning for pandemic flu can be found at the following sites: