



Find information on coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19).

## 1918 Pandemic (H1N1 virus)



The 1918 influenza pandemic was the most severe pandemic in recent history. It was caused by an H1N1 virus with genes of avian origin. Although there is not universal consensus regarding where the virus originated, it spread worldwide during 1918-1919. In the United States, it was first identified in military personnel in spring 1918. It is estimated that about 500 million people or one-third of the world's population became infected with this virus. The number of deaths was estimated to be at least 50 million worldwide with about 675,000 occurring in the United States.

### 1918 Pandemic Video

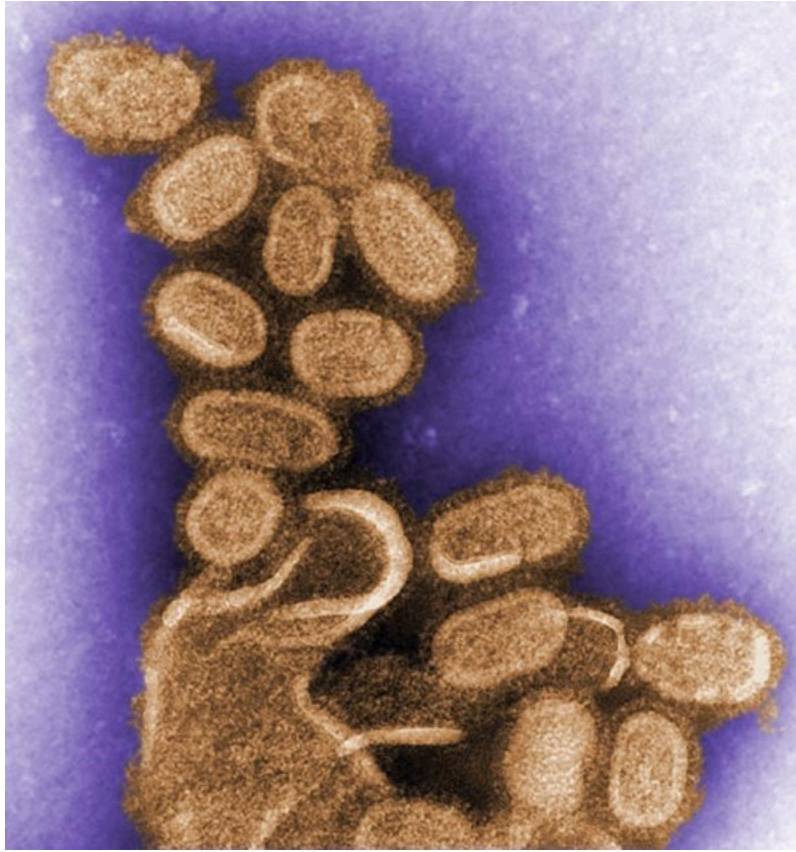
### History of 1918 Flu Pandemic



Read about the 1918 influenza pandemic and progress made in preparedness and response.

Mortality was high in people younger than 5 years old, 20-40 years old, and 65 years and older. The high mortality in healthy people, including those in the 20-40 year age group, was a unique feature of this pandemic. While the [1918 H1N1 virus has been synthesized and evaluated](#), the properties that made it so devastating are not well understood. With no vaccine to protect against influenza infection and no antibiotics to treat secondary bacterial infections that can be associated with influenza infections, control efforts worldwide were limited to non-pharmaceutical interventions such as isolation, quarantine, good personal hygiene, use of disinfectants, and limitations of public gatherings, which were applied unevenly.

## The Deadliest Flu: The Complete Story of the Discovery and Reconstruction of the 1918 Pandemic Virus



The 1918 H1N1 flu virus caused the deadliest pandemic of the 20th century. To better understand this deadly virus, an expert group of researchers and virus hunters set out to search for the lost 1918 virus, sequence its genome, recreate the virus in a highly safe and regulated laboratory setting at CDC, and ultimately study its secrets to better prepare for future pandemics.

### Additional Resources

[The Deadliest Flu: The Complete Story of the Discovery and Reconstruction of the 1918 Pandemic Virus](#)

[1918 Pandemic Flu Partner Webinar](#)

[Pandemic Influenza Storybook](#)

[The Deadly Virus: The Influenza Epidemic of 1918](#) [↗](#)

Pandemic Influenza—Past, Present, Future: Communicating Today Based on the Lessons from the 1918-1919 Influenza Pandemic [📄](#) [1.72 MB, 47 Pages]

[Influenza of 1918 \(Spanish Flu\) and the U.S. Navy](#) [↗](#)

Glezen WP. Emerging infections: pandemic influenza. *Epidemiol Rev.* 1996;18(1):64-76. [↗](#)

Kilbourne ED. Influenza pandemics of the 20th century. *Emerg Infect Dis.* 2006 Jan;12(1):9-14. [↗](#)

Taubenberger JK, Morens DM 1918 influenza: the mother of all pandemics. *Emerg Infect Dis.* 2006;12:15-22

Belser, JA ; Tumpey, TM. The 1918 flu, 100 years later: *Science.* 2018 Jan. Vol. 359, Issue 6373, pp. 255 [↗](#)

Jester, B; Uyeki, T; Jernigan, D. Readiness for Responding to a Severe Pandemic 100 Years After 1918: American Journal of Epidemiology. 2018, Jan. [↗](#)

Last Reviewed: March 20, 2019