

Nonpharmaceutical Interventions and CDC's Community Interventions for Infection Control Unit

Nonpharmaceutical Interventions (NPIs)

Nonpharmaceutical interventions (NPIs) are actions, apart from getting vaccinated and taking medicine, that people and communities can take to help slow the spread of illnesses like influenza (flu). NPIs are also known as community mitigation strategies.

Outbreaks of seasonal flu occur every year, usually during late fall through early spring in the United States. A flu pandemic occurs when a new flu virus emerges among people, causing illness worldwide. No flu pandemic exists now, but it is important to learn how to slow the spread of flu if a pandemic does occur.

Getting vaccinated is the best way to prevent the flu, and a vaccine is available each year for seasonal flu. However, since a pandemic flu virus is new, a vaccine may not be available right away. When NPIs are used together and early in a pandemic, they can be effective in slowing the spread of flu, especially before a vaccine is available.

Germs like flu can spread easily in places where many people are in close contact with one another, so NPIs are especially important in community settings like schools, workplaces, and mass gatherings. Most NPI research has focused on how NPIs can help slow the spread of pandemic flu, but NPIs may also be effective in slowing the spread of other infectious diseases.



Children washing their hands at school.

Personal NPIs

Everyday preventive actions you should always take to help keep yourself and others from getting sick include:

- Washing hands often
- Covering coughs and sneezes
- Cleaning surfaces and objects routinely
- Staying home when sick

Community NPIs

Actions communities might take to increase space between people (social distancing) during a pandemic include:

- Closing schools temporarily
- Making sick-leave policies more flexible
- Offering telework or remote-meeting options
- Postponing or canceling mass gatherings

Community Interventions for Infection Control Unit (CI-ICU)



Woman covering her nose and mouth with a tissue while sneezing.

In May 2010, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention established the Community Interventions for Infection Control Unit (CI-ICU) in the Division of Global Migration and Quarantine. The Unit evolved from the Community Mitigation Task Force, which coordinated NPI research, guidance, and communication during the 2009 H1N1 flu pandemic.

CI-ICU works to prevent and slow the spread of pandemic flu and other infectious diseases in communities through NPIs by:

- Executing research on NPIs
- Educating communities through NPI guidance and communication
- Encouraging adoption of policies that support NPIs
- Engaging partners in NPI research, policy, and communication

CI-ICU's activities include:

- Evaluating the effectiveness of self-isolation to reduce the spread of flu among college students
- Identifying social contact and mixing patterns in school-aged children
- Investigating consequences of unplanned school closures
- Assessing NPI guidance, communication, and training needs of public health officials
- Creating and testing NPI educational messages and materials with the general public
- Developing NPI guidance for public health officials and community leaders

CI-ICU strives to reduce illness and death in communities through improved understanding and implementation of NPIs.

www.cdc.gov/npis

1-800-CDC-INFO (232-4636); cdcinfo@cdc.gov; TTY: 888-232-6348