## HOW DOES SEASONAL FLU DIFFER FROM PANDEMIC FLU?

**November 1, 2005**

### SEASONAL FLU

- Outbreaks follow predictable seasonal patterns; occurs annually, usually in winter, in temperate climates
- Usually some immunity built up from previous exposure
- Healthy adults usually not at risk for serious complications (the very young, the elderly and those with certain underlying health conditions at increased risk for serious complications)
- Health systems can usually meet public and patient needs
- Vaccine developed based on known virus strains and available for annual flu season
- Adequate supplies of antivirals are usually available
- Average U.S. deaths approximately 36,000/yr
- Symptoms: fever, cough, runny nose, muscle pain. Deaths often caused by complications, such as pneumonia.
- Generally causes modest impact on society (e.g., some school closing, encouragement of people who are sick to stay home)
- Manageable impact on domestic and world economy

### PANDEMIC FLU

- Occurs rarely (three times in 20th century - last in 1968)
- No previous exposure; little or no pre-existing immunity
- Healthy people may be at increased risk for serious complications
- Health systems may be overwhelmed
- Vaccine probably would not be available in the early stages of a pandemic
- Effective antivirals may be in limited supply
- Number of deaths could be quite high (e.g., U.S. 1918 death toll approximately 500,000)
- Symptoms may be more severe and complications more frequent
- May cause major impact on society (e.g., widespread restrictions on travel, closings of schools and businesses, cancellation of large public gatherings)
- Potential for severe impact on domestic and world economy

For additional information visit: [www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov)