

IN 1918, A TERRIBLE DISEASE RANSACKED THE GLOBE,  
THE MOST DEADLY DISEASE OUTBREAK IN MODERN HISTORY.  
THE DISEASE WAS INFLUENZA, BUT IT WAS...

# NO ORDINARY FLU



**ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:**  
HOW YOU CAN PREPARE  
FOR THE CURRENT  
PANDEMIC THREAT



# NO ORDINARY FLU

Hey mom,  
who is  
this?



That's your  
great uncle  
Arturo.

He died in the  
great pandemic  
of 1918.

they say it nearly broke  
Great-Grandma  
Maria's heart.

But he looked so young.  
What happened?





In the fall of 1918, it looked like the first World War was winding down...



For our family, things were looking up.



It's good to be back, Maria, even if it means helping Ma and Pop out at the store.

Everyone loved Arturo.

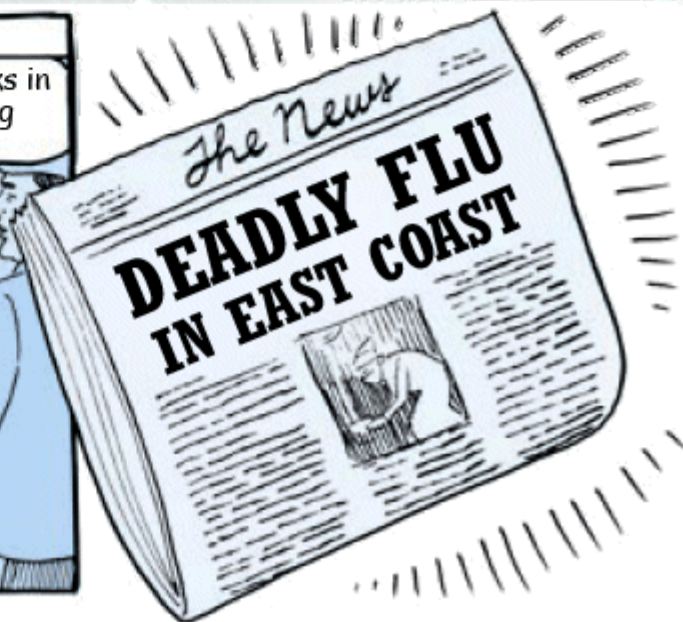


Great to have you back, soldier!

Thanks, Max!

But life would soon take a different turn.

Aunt Eva says that folks in Philadelphia are dying from influenza.





In a matter of weeks, the flu had arrived, and your great grandma was the first to get sick.



She's delirious. I'll take care of her. Arturo, fill in for me at the store.

Almost overnight, their world had changed.



No delivery today. Max is sick.

When his mother fell ill, Arturo cared for her and Maria.



Arturo, we just don't have any nurses available. So many of our doctors and nurses are sick, and there are too many sick people.



It wasn't much better at the store.

I'm sorry ma'am. We just aren't getting any shipments.





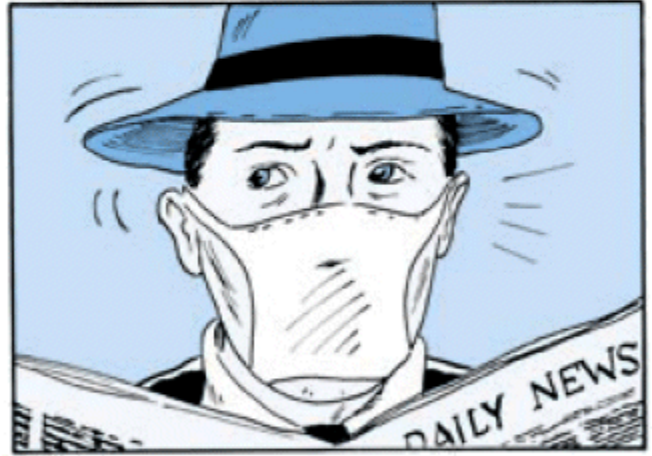
The entire city was suffering.



Fortunately, Maria and her mother started to recover after a few weeks.



But the family wasn't out of the woods yet.



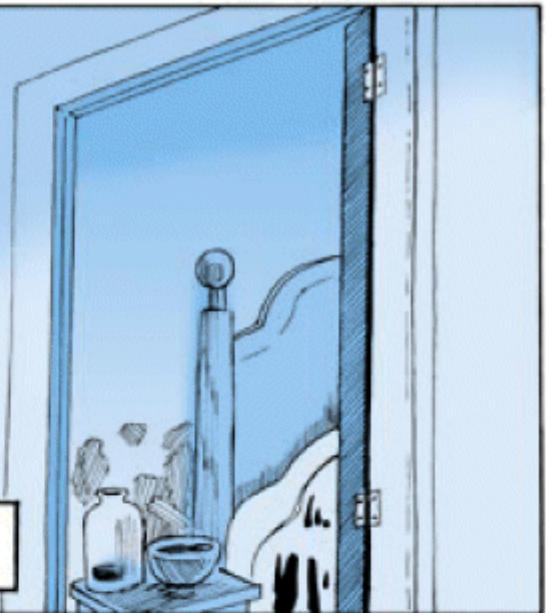


Like many other young adults, Arturo became very sick, very quickly.



He died

the next day.

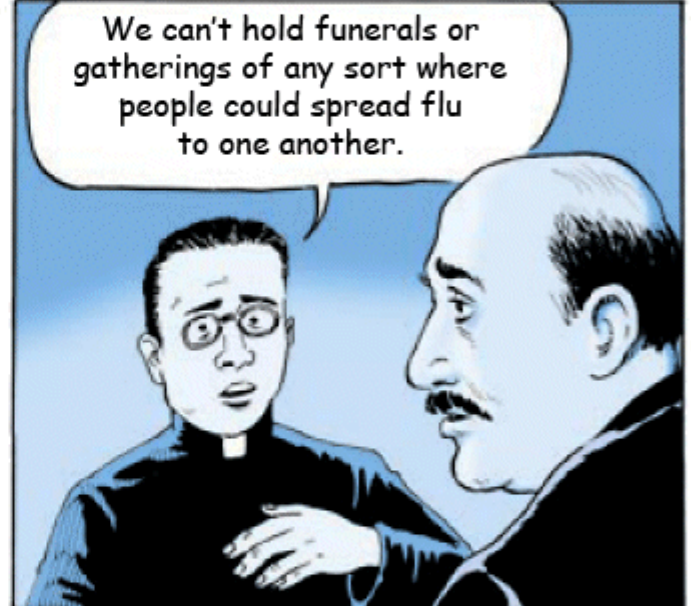


It was hard for everyone.

I'm sorry, ma'am. We're all out of coffins.



We can't hold funerals or gatherings of any sort where people could spread flu to one another.



Maria took it the hardest.



So many died. 50 million people died in the pandemic around the world, 675,000 in the United States.



Devastating numbers, but the vast majority survived.

Your great-grandmother Maria— was a survivor.



"We are all descendants of survivors of the 1918 pandemic."

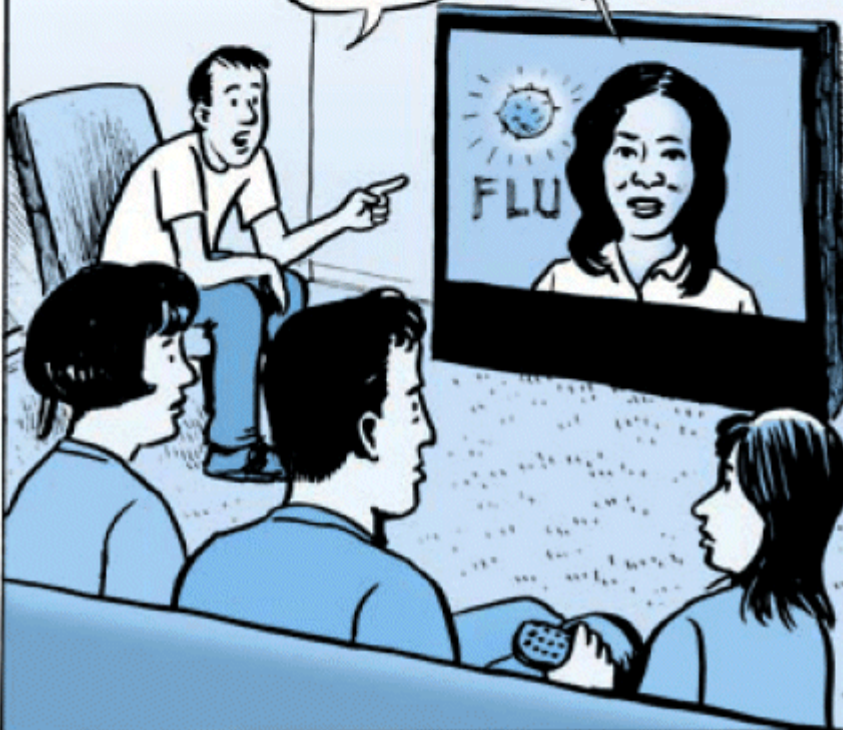


But the threat of pandemic influenza hasn't left.

LATER:

"...health experts are concerned that a new flu virus could spark a pandemic..."

Hey Mom!



Pandemic flu is different from the flu we see each winter.

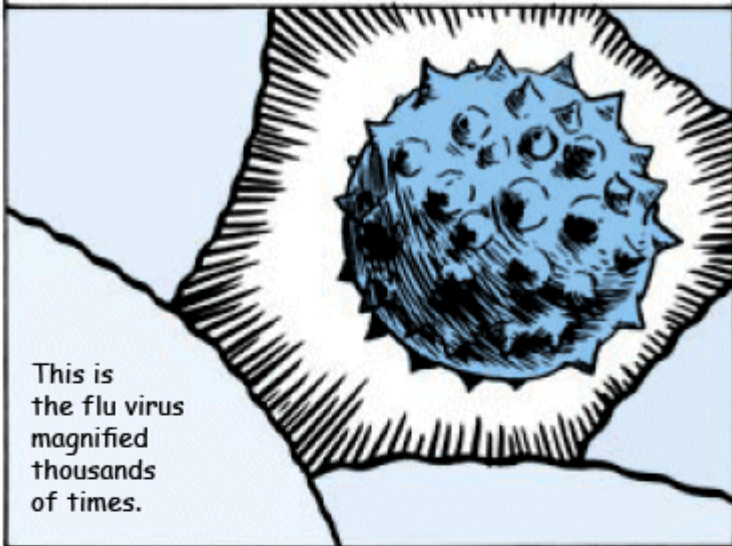


It's caused by a new virus that the human body has never encountered.





Our bodies will have trouble fighting a new flu virus.

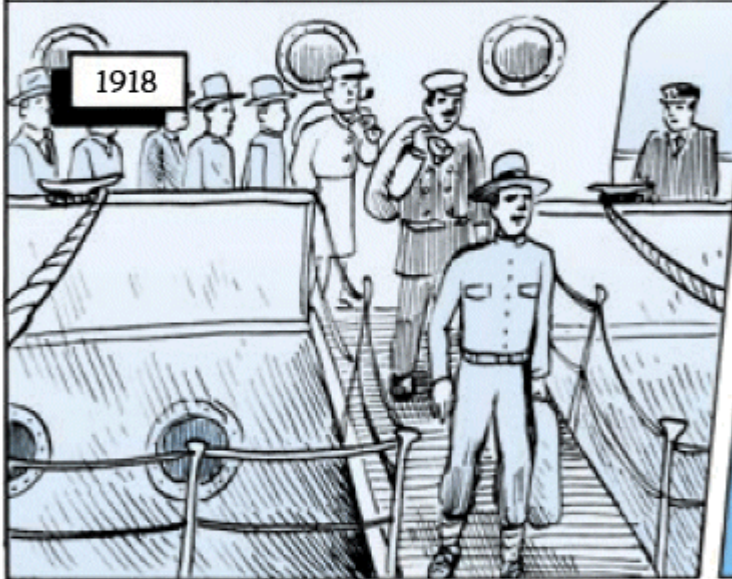


This is the flu virus magnified thousands of times.

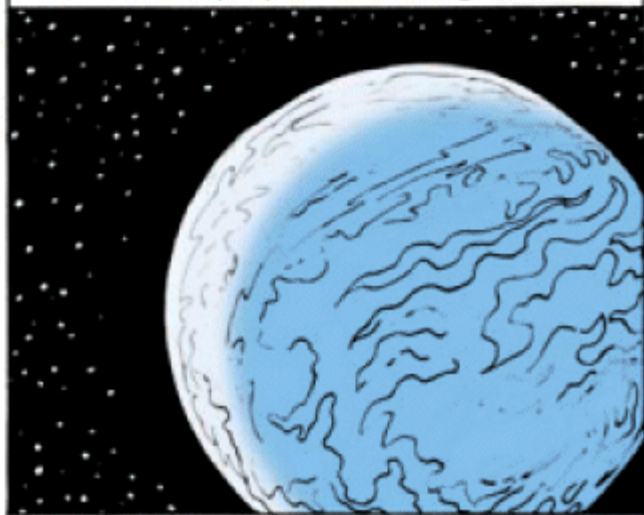
Unlike the flu we see each winter, there is no pandemic flu vaccine at this time.



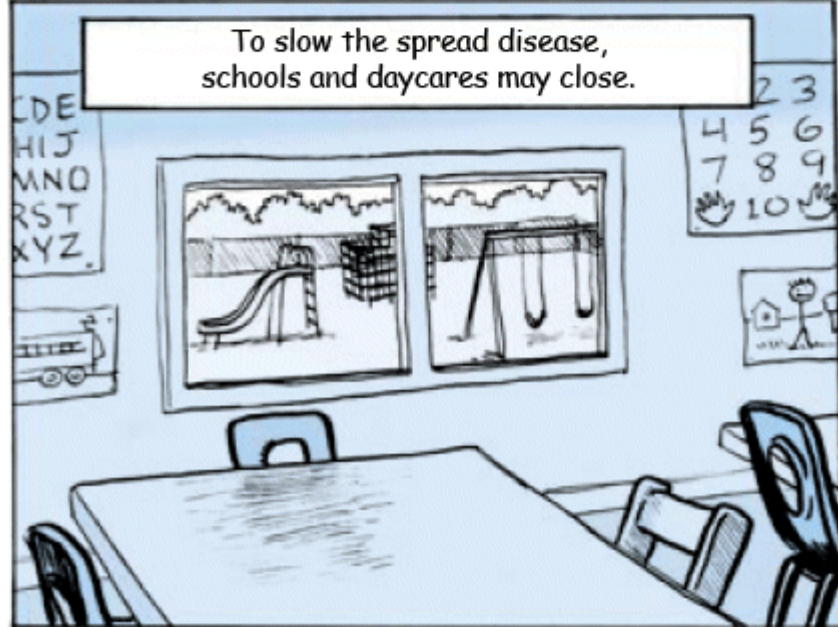
A pandemic virus would spread quickly through contact between people.



Pandemic flu will spread to every corner of the world. Everywhere, everyday life will change.

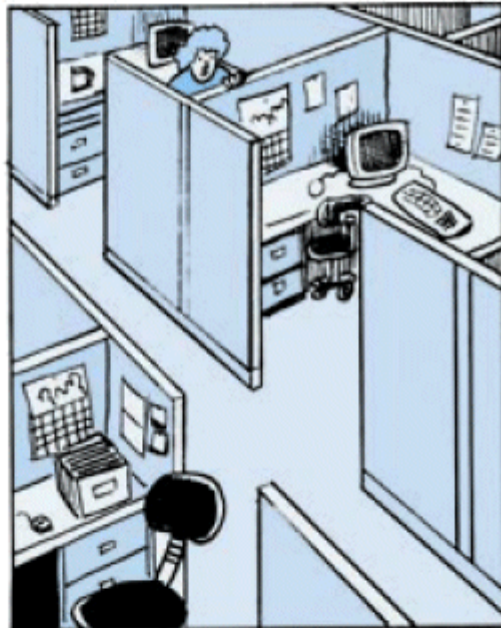


To slow the spread disease, schools and daycares may close.

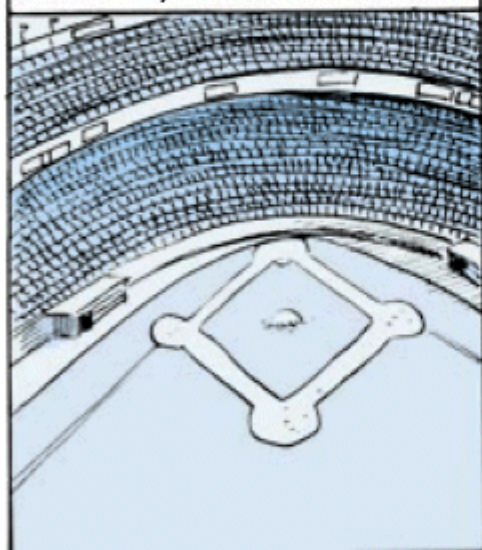




Many people will be unable to work.



Public events may be cancelled.



It may be difficult to get medical care.



Dr. Van is sick too. I don't know how we can keep up.



But most flu patients can be cared for at home.



It might not be as bad as 1918. Two milder flu pandemics happened in 1957 and 1968.



But even if it's milder, we need to be prepared.





Be ready to stay home for at least a week.\*



\* At a minimum, since a pandemic may last weeks to months.

Store health and medical supplies.



Decide who will take care of children if schools are closed.



Plan how you can work from home, if possible.



Be ready to help neighbors during a pandemic.



Stop flu germs. They spread when people cough and sneeze.

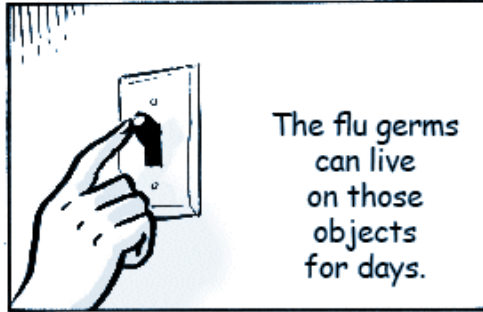




Or when hands that have flu germs on them...



...pass the germs to other objects.



The flu germs can live on those objects for days.

Washing your hands frequently is the best protection.



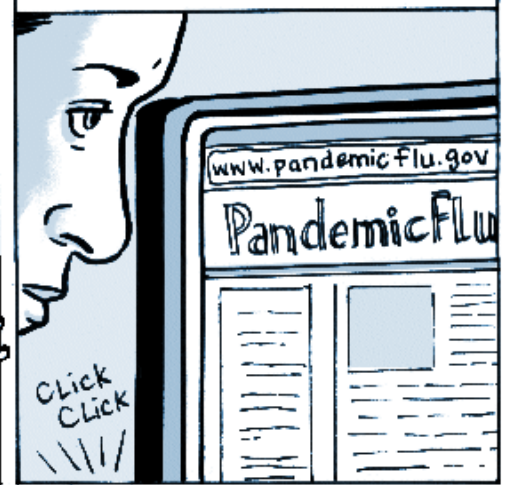
Use hand sanitizer if you don't have soap and water.



Stop flu germs by covering your coughs and sneezes.



Learn more about pandemic flu from your health department or this website...



No one knows when a pandemic will come, right?



True. But if we prepare now, we'll get through a pandemic much better when it does come.



And remember, most people will survive even a bad pandemic, just like your Great Grandmother Maria.





## Glossary:

**Influenza (or flu):** an illness of the nose, throat and lungs that is caused by an influenza virus. Flu can be passed from one person to another.

**Pandemic:** disease which starts in one place and spreads around the world.

**Virus:** a type of germ that can cause mild illness, such as the common cold, or some very serious diseases. Antibiotics do not work against viruses.

## Acknowledgements

Developed by Public Health – Seattle & King County Advanced Practice Center

Concept and story by Meredith Li-Vollmer and Matthew French

Artwork by David Lasky (with an inking assist by Lin Lucas)

Funding provided by Cooperative Agreement Number U50/CCU302718 from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to the National Association of County & City Health Officials (NACCHO). Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of CDC or NACCHO.



# NACCHO

National Association of County & City Health Officials  
The National Connection for Local Public Health



Public Health   
Seattle & King County