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## Three outbreaks that claimed up to 45m lives last century

THE world experienced three devastating pandemics in the 20th century, resulting in the loss of millions of lives.

The influenza pandemic which raged between 1918 and 1919, also known as Spanish flu or la Grippe, killed more people than the Great War. Between 20 and 40 million people died worldwide and the pandemic has been cited as the most devastating epidemic in recorded world history. More than 250,000 people died in the UK.

Originating in Kweichow, China, in February 1957, a strain of Asian flu named H2N2 killed around one million people globally and 33,000 in the UK. It spread into the rest of Asia, the Middle East and Europe, before reaching the Americas that June.

Advances in scientific technology meant the virus was quickly identified and a vaccine was available by that August. The disease mostly affected the very young and very old.

The Hong Kong flu of 1968 to 1969, named H3N2, originated in Guangdong in southern China and claimed four million lives worldwide, including 78,000 in the UK.

### Web links

- [Dept of Health - pandemic flu](http://www.dh.gov.uk/PolicyAndGuidance/EmergencyPlanning/PandemicFlu/fs/en)  
<http://www.dh.gov.uk/PolicyAndGuidance/EmergencyPlanning/PandemicFlu/fs/en>
- [WHO - Bird Flu fact sheet](http://www.who.int/csr/don/2004_01_15/en/)  
[http://www.who.int/csr/don/2004\\_01\\_15/en/](http://www.who.int/csr/don/2004_01_15/en/)

### Related topic

- [Bird flu](http://news.scotsman.com/topics.cfm?tid=161)  
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