

What you need to know about **Caring for influenza (flu) at home**



Influenza (the flu) is a serious respiratory illness that causes high fever, cough, severe muscle and joint aches, and fatigue. It can also lead to pneumonia and other complications. Flu symptoms can last a week or longer.

Most otherwise healthy people will be able to manage their illness at home using the advice in this fact sheet. For those who have recovered and are returning to work, health care providers may not be available to provide sick notes during busy flu periods. You do not need a note to say that you are no longer infectious once you are better.

SYMPTOMS OF INFLUENZA

Symptoms of the flu include sudden onset of fever, chills or shakes (sometimes not present in those less than 5 years of age or 65 years and older); cough; sore throat; headache; sore muscles and joints; tiredness; and diarrhea and vomiting, especially in children.

INFECTED PERSONS

If you or someone in your household is sick with the flu:

- Stay home until you have not had a fever for 24 hours and are feeling better. Health care workers who are sick should remain off work until they have had no symptoms for 24 hours with the exception of a mild cough.
- Get lots of rest and drink fluids.
- Treat fever with acetaminophen (Tylenol®) or ibuprofen (Advil®, Motrin®)
- Avoid the use of aspirin and aspirin-containing products for children, teenagers and pregnant women.
- Cough into a tissue or sleeve. Discard used tissues immediately.
- Avoid contact with the rest of the family by using a separate bedroom and bathroom if possible. Use separate towels.
- If you need to be close to others, consider wearing a surgical mask.
- Wash hands frequently using liquid soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub.
- Don't share anything that goes in your mouth, like utensils, drinking glasses or toothbrushes.
- Try to avoid having visitors in the house.
- If you need to leave the house for a medical appointment, try to maintain a distance of at least six (6) feet from others. Consider wearing a surgical mask.

CARETAKERS

If you are taking care of someone in your household who is sick with the flu:

- If possible, only one family member should care for a sick person. Pregnant women should avoid taking care of others if that is an option.
- Have as little close contact as possible with the sick person. Stay at least six (6) feet away from the sick person if possible.
- When holding small children who are sick, place their chin on your shoulder so that they do not cough in your face.
- Wash your hands frequently with liquid soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer, and after each time you care for a sick person.
- Provide extra cleaning in frequently touched areas of the house (table tops, keyboards, door knobs, counter tops, remote controls, telephones, light switches, etc). Dishwashing and laundry can be done as normal.

HOUSEHOLD CONTACTS

Well people in your household should:

- Watch for symptoms that include fever, cough, sore throat, sore muscles, joint pain, fatigue, and sometimes diarrhea and vomiting.
- At the first sign of illness, stay home until you do not have a fever and are feeling better.

GETTING TREATMENT

Telehealth Ontario is a free, confidential telephone service you can call to get health advice or information from a Registered Nurse: call 1-866-797-0000.

When should I seek medical care?

The following people should contact their health care provider or go to a walk-in clinic at the first signs of influenza because they are at higher risk of complications from the flu:

- Pregnant women and women who have had a baby in the past month

- Those with underlying medical conditions such as heart disease, asthma and other lung diseases, diabetes, cancer, HIV, kidney disease, anemia and neurological problems, and people whose immune systems are compromised (e.g., transplant patients)
- People who are over 65
- Children under 5
- People who are very overweight
- People under 18 years of age who take daily aspirin

When should I seek emergency care?

Anyone experiencing these problems should go to the nearest emergency department:

- Difficulty breathing, breathing very fast or having chest pain
- Purple or blue discoloration of the lips
- Vomiting and unable to keep liquids down
- Signs of dehydration, such as dizziness when standing, absence of urination, or in infants, a lack of tears when crying
- Seizure
- Less responsive than normal or becoming confused
- Fever that does not go away or comes back after being absent for four or five days
- In infants, severe crankiness or persistent crying

When you call, advise your health care provider's office, the emergency department or ambulance that you have symptoms of the flu so that the proper precautions can be taken to prevent the spread to others.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact Oxford County Public Health at 519 539-9800 or toll-free at 1 800 755-0394

Visit the Oxford County website:

www.oxfordcounty.ca/publichealth

Visit the Public Health Agency of Canada website:

www.phac-aspc.gc.ca or www.fightflu.ca