



Helpful Tips for Taking Care of a Sick Person in Your Home*

What is Swine Flu?

Swine Influenza (swine flu) is a type A virus infection that can cause a wide range of symptoms, including fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some have reported diarrhea and vomiting associated with swine flu. Like seasonal flu, swine flu in humans can vary in severity from mild to severe.

How Flu Spreads

The main way that influenza viruses are thought to spread is from person to person through coughs and sneezes. This can happen when an infected person coughs or sneezes near persons not infected. Sometimes, people may become infected by touching something with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth or nose before washing their hands.

Helpful Tips to Care for Family Members:

- Ask their health care provider about any special care they might need if they are pregnant or have a health condition such as diabetes, heart disease, asthma, or emphysema
- Ask their health care provider about whether they should take antiviral medications
- **Stay home for 7 days (for adults, 10 days for children) after the start of illness and fever is gone**
- Get plenty of rest
- Drink clear fluids (such as water, broth, sports drinks, electrolyte beverages for infants) to keep from being dehydrated
- Cover coughs and sneezes. Clean hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub often
- Avoid close contact with others – do not go to work or school while ill
- Be watchful of warning signs that may indicate you need to seek medical attention

Suggested Medications

Check with your healthcare provider or pharmacist for correct, safe use of medications

Warning! Do *not* give aspirin (acetylsalicylic acid) to children or teenagers who have the flu; this can cause a rare but serious illness called Reye's syndrome.

- Check ingredient labels on over-the-counter cold and flu medications to see if they contain aspirin.
- Teenagers with the flu can take medicines *without* aspirin, such as acetaminophen (Tylenol®) and ibuprofen (Advil®, Motrin®, Nuprin®), to relieve symptoms.
- Children younger than 2 years of age should not be given over-the-counter cold medications without first speaking with a healthcare provider.
- The safest care for flu symptoms in children younger than 2 years of age is using a cool-mist humidifier and a suction bulb to help clear away mucus.
- Fevers and aches can be treated with acetaminophen (Tylenol®) or ibuprofen (Advil®, Motrin®, Nuprin®) or nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs).

Antiviral medications can sometimes help lessen influenza symptoms, but require a prescription. Most people do not need these antiviral drugs to fully recover from the flu. Check with your health care provider or pharmacist if you are taking other over-the-counter or prescription medications not related to the flu. For more information on products for treating flu symptoms, see the FDA website: http://www.fda.gov/fdac/features/2005/105_buy.html.

When to Seek Emergency Medical Care

Get medical care right away if the sick person at home:

- has difficulty breathing or chest pain
- has purple or blue discoloration of the lips
- is vomiting and unable to keep liquids down
- has signs of dehydration such as dizziness when standing, absence of urination, or in infants, a lack of tears when they cry
- has seizures (for example, uncontrolled convulsions)
- is less responsive than normal or becomes confused

Tips to Care for Household

When providing care to a household member who is sick with influenza, the most important ways to protect yourself and others who are not sick are to:

- Keep the sick person away from other people as much as possible
- Remind the sick person to cover their coughs, and clean their hands often
- Have everyone in the household clean their hands often
- Ask your healthcare provider if household contacts of the sick person—particularly those contacts who may have chronic health conditions—should take antiviral medications to prevent the flu.
- The sick person should not have visitors other than caregivers. A phone call is safer than a visit.
- If possible, have only one adult in the home take care of the sick person.
- Avoid having pregnant women care for the sick person. (Pregnant women are at increased risk of influenza-related complications and immunity can be suppressed during pregnancy).
- If you're the caregiver, avoid being face-to-face with the sick person.
- When holding small children who are sick, place their chin on your shoulder so that they will not cough in your face.

For More Information:

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Hotline (1-800-CDC-INFO) is available in English and Spanish, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Also, more information can be found on the Department of Health and Hospitals – Office of Public Health web site, www.flula.com.



**Excerpts taken from CDC article "Interim Guidance for Swine influenza A (H1N1): Taking Care of a Sick Person in Your Home"
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