



HOME ISOLATION

Instructions for Persons with Fever and Cough to Reduce Spread of Influenza in the Home

If you, your child or someone you live with has a fever and a cough, or were told they could have H1N1 flu, you should follow the recommendations below to help prevent the spread of disease to others who live in the home. Influenza can be transmitted when an infected person coughs or sneezes. It is also possible to become infected by touching surfaces contaminated with the virus, and then touching your own nose or mouth. Covering coughs and sneezes and washing hands with soap and water or with an alcohol-based hand rub are essential in stopping the spread of influenza.

During the period of illness, especially fever, it is possible for the sick person to transmit this virus to those with whom they have close contact (for example, someone living with or caring with the sick). To help prevent transmission of influenza virus to close contacts, the Health Department is asking that the sick person **stay at home until at least 24 hours after your symptoms are completely gone**. During that time, please follow these guidelines:

THE PERSON WHO IS SICK SHOULD:

- **STAY AT HOME until at least 24 hours after their symptoms are completely gone.**
- **CONTACT A DOCTOR:** Contact a doctor to ask whether it is necessary to be seen for medical evaluation or care. Most people with influenza have mild illness and do not need to be seen by a doctor.
- **AVOID CLOSE CONTACT:** Limit contact with others. Avoid close contact such as kissing. Do not share toothbrushes, cigarettes or drinks with people who are well. People living in the home should limit contact with the sick person to the extent possible. Consider designating one person (not someone who is pregnant) as the primary person who will care for the sick person.
 - If possible, stay in a room separate from the common areas of the house or apartment (a spare bedroom, for example if that's possible).
- **COVER YOUR MOUTH:** *ALWAYS* cover the mouth and nose with a tissue when sneezing, coughing or blowing the nose.
- **HAND HYGIENE:** *ALWAYS* wash hands with soap or water or use alcohol-based hand rubs after coughing or sneezing or throwing a used tissue in the garbage. Throw out used tissues with the regular garbage. Do not touch their nose, face or eyes after coughing or sneezing.
- **CLEAN THE HOME:** While the virus is likely not spread very well from contact with soiled household surfaces, cleaning of surfaces that are frequently touched (such as door knobs or any other object that they sneeze or cough on) may help prevent transmission. All hard surfaces such as bedside tables, bathroom surfaces, doorknobs, and children's toys should be cleaned with a standard household disinfectant. If surfaces are visibly dirty use a household cleaner first, then a disinfectant. Wash hands after cleaning the area.
 - Dirty dishes and eating utensils should be washed in a dishwasher or by hand with warm water and soap.
 - Laundry can be washed in a standard washing machine with warm or cold water and detergent. Linens and towels should also be tumble dried on a hot setting. It is not necessary to separate soiled linen and laundry your laundry from other household laundry.
- **MASKS:** When close contact with other people in the home is unavoidable, or when it is necessary for the sick person to leave the home, the sick person should wear a surgical mask to help prevent the spread of the virus. Surgical masks can be purchased in a pharmacy or hardware store.

HOME ISOLATION - Instructions for Patients Being Discharged from Medical Settings (cont.)

THE CLOSE CONTACTS SHOULD:

- **SELF MONITOR:** Other household members should monitor themselves closely for the development of illness. If they get a mild illness with fever and a cough, they should stay at home and take the same precautions listed above.
- **HOME VISITS:** Sick people should not have visitors while they are ill. If anyone who does not live with the patient must enter the home, they should avoid contact with the sick person.
- **HAND HYGIENE:** All people in the household, especially those who must come in close contact with the sick person should clean their hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub frequently and after every contact with the sick person.
- **LAUNDRY:** If someone else is doing laundry for the sick person, they should avoid “hugging” laundry prior to washing it to prevent self-contamination and clean hands with soap and water or alcohol-based hand rub right after handling dirty laundry.
- **MASKS:** Close contacts may consider using a facemask (e.g. surgical mask) or an N95 respirator. These can be purchased at a pharmacy or hardware store. If a reusable fabric facemask is used, it should be laundered with normal laundry detergent and tumble-dried in a hot dryer.

DOES THE SICK PERSON NEED TO TAKE MEDICINE?

Persons should only take medicine for influenza if their doctor prescribes it for them. For people with certain underlying medical conditions, a medicine called either oseltamivir (Tamiflu®) or zanamavir (Relenza™) may be recommended. Consult a doctor to see if the sick person needs medicine. If they have other underlying medical conditions, they should consult with their doctor. They should rest, drink plenty of liquids, and take medications that they would normally take to treat their symptoms, such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen. People who are under 18 years of age should NOT take aspirin or aspirin-containing products (e.g., Pepto-Bismol™), as this can cause a rare serious illness called Reye’s Syndrome in young people with the flu.

WHAT TO DO IF SYMPTOMS WORSEN

If symptoms worsen, (see **WHEN TO CONTACT A DOCTOR RIGHT AWAY**), call a doctor or seek medical care immediately. When going to the doctor’s office or the emergency room, have a family member or friend drive the sick person in a private car or take a taxi. Do NOT take public transportation (subway or bus). If going to a doctor, **please contact the doctor before leaving the home and tell the doctor the sick person may have the flu.** After arriving, go straight to the receptionist or triage nurse so that **the sick person can be put in a private room while they wait to see the doctor.** The sick person may be asked to wear a mask and they should sit away from others as much as possible. If the sick person needs to take an ambulance to take them to the hospital, **let the 911 operator know they may have the flu and also let the ambulance crew know when they arrive.**

SHOULD HOUSEHOLD OR OTHER CLOSE CONTACTS TAKE MEDICINE TO PREVENT H1N1 (SO)?

Most people who live with or have close contact with people with H1N1 (SO) do NOT need to take any medication to prevent illness. To find out whether preventive medication such as oseltamivir (Tamiflu®) or zanamavir (Relenza™) is recommended, call a doctor.

WHERE TO GET MORE INFORMATION

For more information, call a doctor or visit the following websites that have information about swine flu:
www.cdc.gov / www.who.int / www.nyc.gov/health or call 311

Created on 5/1/09 6:06PM

WHEN TO CONTACT A DOCTOR RIGHT AWAY

Children:

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Lethargic or not interacting
- Increasing irritability
- Flu-like symptoms improve but return with fever and worse cough

Adults

- Difficulty breathing
- Shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion