

Caring for People with Influenza at Home



Instructions for the sick person:

- Stay home until you do not have a fever and are feeling better. Health care workers who are ill should be off work for a minimum of 7 days from onset of symptoms; after which, they can return to work when their fever is gone and they are feeling better.
- Avoid contact with the rest of the family as much as possible. Ensure you have your own towel in the bathroom.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue. Use your sleeve if a tissue is not available. Discard used tissues right away and wash your hands.
- Wash hands frequently using warm water and pump soap or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Don't share anything that goes in your mouth such as unwashed utensils or drinking glasses and toothbrushes.
- Try to avoid having visitors in the house.
- If you need to leave the house for a medical appointment, try to minimize direct contact with others as much as possible. See below for when to seek medical care.
- Follow the advice of your health care provider or call Telehealth Ontario @ 1-866-797-0000.
- Avoid the use of aspirin and aspirin-containing products for children and teenagers.

Instructions for caregivers:

- If possible, choose only one family member to care for a sick person. Pregnant women and people with medical problems may want to avoid providing direct care if possible.
- Try to maintain a distance of at least 2 metres (6 feet) between you and the sick person whenever possible.
- When holding a small child who is sick, place their chin on your shoulder so that they do not cough in your face.
- Wash your hands frequently with warm water and pump soap or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer before and after each time you care for the sick person.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Perform 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 usual.

Instructions for all household contacts:

- Watch for symptoms that include: fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills, fatigue and sometimes diarrhea and vomiting for children.
- Stay home if you become ill (see 'Instructions for the sick person' above).

Call a health care provider if the sick person:

- Has pre-existing medical conditions, is pregnant, is under 2 years of age or is 65 years of age and older;
- Has questions or concerns about his/her symptoms or overall health.

Seek emergency care if the sick person:

- Has difficulty breathing (fast breathing for children) or has shortness of breath;
- Has chest pain;
- Has purple or blue discoloration of the lips or skin;
- Has severe or persistent vomiting;
- Has signs of dehydration such as dizziness when standing and/or absence of urination. A sign of dehydration in infants is a lack of tears when they cry and/or not drinking enough fluids;
- Has a seizure;
- Is less responsive than normal or becomes confused. Children may experience severe tiredness and irritability;
- Influenza-like symptoms become worse or improve but then return with fever and worse cough.

For additional information, please contact your health care provider or the Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit @ 613-345-5685 / 613-283-2740 / 1-800-660-5853 or visit www.healthunit.org