



Caring for Children with Influenza (Flu)

How do I know if my child has influenza?

The usual symptoms for flu are fever (greater than 38°C), chills, headache, muscle and joint aches, extreme fatigue, cough, sore throat and loss of appetite. Children may have different flu symptoms than adults. Flu symptoms can also be different between children because of age and other factors. Children may also experience diarrhea, vomiting, stomach pain, earaches and red eyes. Sometimes children with the flu will not have a fever.

What do I do if my child has influenza?

- o Try to keep your child comfortable.
- o Offer fluids and small, nutritious snacks often
- o Encourage and allow child to get plenty of rest
- o Treat your child's symptoms.
- o Fever – dress in lightweight clothing, offer cool fluids, give lukewarm sponge or tub baths, give acetaminophen or ibuprofen for fever in the dose recommended on the package (unless doctor says otherwise)

NOTE: Do not give acetylsalicylic acid (ASA or aspirin) to children or teenagers under the age of 18 because it may lead to Reye syndrome

- o Sore throat – have child gargle with warm water
- o Stuffy nose – use salt water nose drops
- o Keep your child at home from school, sports, social clubs etc. – your child may return to school and other activities when a fever has been absent for at least 24 hours (with no over the counter medications) and the child is feeling well enough to participate in regular activities. A lingering cough is normal.

When should I seek medical attention?

Call your health care provider if :

- o you have questions or concerns about your child's symptoms or overall health
- o your child has the flu and has a pre-existing chronic illness or is under 2 years of age

Seek emergency care if your child has:

- o difficulty breathing
- o signs of dehydration such as dizziness when standing and/or absence of urination
- o persistent vomiting for more than 4 hours
- o confusion and is less responsive than usual
- o not felt better after 5 days and still has a fever
- o flu-like symptoms that become worse
- o symptoms that improve but then return with fever or worse cough

Information Sources:

Ministry of Health and Long Term Care <http://www.health.gov.on.ca>;

Canadian Pediatric Society www.caringforkids.cps.ca