

Isolating the Ill in the Result of an Influenza Pandemic

If you are a person with a chronic cough and fever, it is important to seek medical attention to find the reason for your illness. The symptoms of Pandemic Influenza are very similar to those of the regular flu. If you are sick with a pandemic influenza, it is important that you stay home. If this means missing a few classes, or a few days of work until you feel better. It is better that one person misses a couple days of work, than 8 because the influenza was not properly contained. You can then be properly isolated in the comfort of your own home.

If you have a group of people that are sick, the best way to deal with them is to isolate them together. The following information applies to where any groups of people live together. Like apartment buildings, student houses, or residences.

During an influenza pandemic, you may need to provide basic care for the ill, as hospitals could be overwhelmed. When feasible, an ill person should go home (if place they are staying is not their permanent residence) but if this is not achievable, an ill person should be isolated as soon as possible to reduce the chance of spreading the virus. Depending on the size of the house, apartment, residence, etc, several persons may need to be isolated at one time. Designated rooms should be arranged.

You may encounter a range of challenges in isolating ill persons, including the physical lay-out of the building.

Consideration should be given to the following recommendations when caring for ill persons.

- place ill persons in a single room, if possible
- separate ill persons in the same room by more than one metre
- if you're a care giver, wear a mask if you are within two metres of the ill person
- in shared rooms, arrange beds so that persons lie head to toe relative to persons in neighboring beds
- provide easy access to washrooms if possible. If a communal washroom is used, clean them frequently
- increase the cleaning schedule for common areas
- ensure ill persons have access to food, water and medications
- send severely ill persons to the hospital, if necessary