

## Recovering from the Flu: Caring for Yourself and Others

### 1. Protect yourself and others

If possible, have the **sick person wear a simple surgical mask** if there is another person in the same room within 2 metres (6 feet) of them. If the sick person will not wear a mask, encourage the use of a tissue when coughing or sneezing. If someone else is going to be within 2 metres (6 feet) of a sick person, they **can wear a simple surgical mask and safety glasses**.

**Clean your hands often**, either with soap and water or an alcohol-based (60-90%) hand sanitizer:

- before and after putting on or taking off a mask.
- after touching anything that a sick person has touched (such as dishes, towels, clothes, and trash).
- After using a tissue to cover a cough or sneeze.
- before you eat and before touching your eyes, nose or mouth.

Use paper towels for drying hands after hand washing or give separate cloth towels to each person in the household. For example, have different colored towels for each person.

Cleaning your hands is the best way to prevent the spread of germs.

### 2. Allow the ill person to rest away from others.

Anyone sick with H1N1 flu virus is estimated to be able to spread the illness for 7 days from the start of the illness.

**Stay at home when you are sick.** You should be without fever or symptoms of a fever for 24-hours without the use of fever-reducing medications before returning to school or work. This recommendation is subject to change as the H1N1 situation unfolds.

The sick person should generally stay at least 2 metres (6 feet) away from others, preferably in a well-ventilated room of their own. Sick people need lots of rest; visitors should be few – a phone call is safer. Remember to clean the phone or other surfaces with household cleaner after use by the ill person as the virus can survive on a hard surface for up to 2 days.

### 3. Treat the fever and cough

Coughs and sneezes spread diseases as the spray has the virus in it.

The ill person should cover the cough with a tissue or his/her arm. Tissues should be placed in a waste basket and then the hands cleaned with soap and water or a hand sanitizer.

If needed, give a mild cough suppressant, especially at night, to help them sleep. Health Canada does NOT recommend cough medicines be given to children under 6 years.

Fever often comes with chills or aches and pains. Acetaminophen (Tylenol, Tempra) or ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin) every 6 hours may help to bring down the fever and take away the aches. Do not give aspirin (acetylsalicylic acid) to children under 18 years with fever. A cool face cloth to the face and neck, or over the whole body can help the fever.

If antiviral medications have been ordered, ensure the ill person gets it twice a day for 5 days.

### 4. Give lots of fluids, nutritious food and ensure a smoke-free environment with no one smoking in your home.

This all helps the body recover.

**5. Keep the sick person's things separate from others and handle anything they touch with care.**

Each sick person should have their own towel, face cloth, toothbrush, etc. that are kept away from those who are well.

Wash dishes, dirty laundry and towels with hot water and soap as soon as you take them out of the room. Always clean your hands afterwards and avoid touching your eyes.

Line their garbage with a plastic bag, so you don't need to touch the contents. Ideally, have a garbage bin with a foot pedal, so that you do not need to touch the garbage to put something in it.

You can clean door knobs and light switches with a regular household cleaner. Clean the bathroom daily.

**6. Be on alert for complications**

After following these instructions, most people will begin to feel better after a few days. However, be on the lookout. Sometimes complications, such as asthma or pneumonia arise and the ill person may need to have a health assessment.

**Take the sick person's temperature daily.** Here are some signs to look for:

- Starts to feel better, then the fever returns
- Wheezing, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, coughing up blood
- Purple or bluish lip color
- Chest pain
- Hard to wake up, unusually quiet or unresponsive, strange thoughts or actions
- Begins to have diarrhea, vomiting or abdominal pain again
- Signs of dehydration such as dizziness when standing and low urine production

If any of these things occur, call a health care provider for advice. If the ill person needs to seek medical care, they should wear a surgical mask if available. This is especially important if the ill person is using public transportation. Monitor yourself and other family members for flu symptoms.

**7. Get the seasonal flu shot every year**

Get your seasonal influenza shot every year – the "flu" shot will not protect you from H1N1 flu virus, but it will protect you from getting ordinary/seasonal flu, which could weaken your immune system or make you likely to get another illness.

**Tips on wearing a mask**

- Tie the mask securely behind your head, and make sure the mask fully covers your nose and mouth.
- Replace the mask when it becomes wet or damp – a mask only works when it is dry.
- Avoid touching your face while wearing the mask.
- Do not let the mask hang around your neck – discard after use .
- Remove the mask by only touching the straps and place the used mask directly in the garbage. Wash your hands immediately.
- Do not share a mask.