

# Caring for Yourself when you have the *Flu* (*influenza*)

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**Influenza is an infectious respiratory disease caused by an influenza virus.**

## **SIGNS OF THE FLU**

Typically, it starts with sudden onset of fever, sore throat, cough and muscle aches, but you may have some or all of these symptoms:

- Fever and chills;
- Body aches, especially in the back and legs;
- Headache;
- Dry cough;
- Weak and tired;
- Sore throat;
- Runny or stuffy nose;
- Loss of appetite.

## **HOW DOES THE FLU SPREAD?**

The flu can spread rapidly from person to person by:

- A simple cough or sneeze, or
- Contact with something recently contaminated by fluids from an infected person (like shaking hands with someone who has sneezed).

## **HOW YOU CAN CARE FOR YOURSELF WHEN YOU HAVE THE FLU**

- **Stay home and rest** – this is one of the best things you can do to fight the flu and avoid spreading it to others.
- **Drink plenty of liquids** – this will help to replace the fluid lost from fever and sweating.
- **Take medication for your symptoms** – your pharmacist can help you choose the right over-the-counter medicine. \*Make sure you mention if you have a chronic illness or are taking other medication.
- **Gargle** – to help a sore throat, gargle with a glass of warm water mixed with a half-teaspoon of salt. Throat lozenges are also effective.
- **Wash your hands often** – this will help you avoid spreading the virus to others.
- **Ask for help** – you may need to ask for help until you are feeling better.
- **If you have a chronic health problem, or are taking medication, get advice from a pharmacist or your physician.**

# Hand washing is an easy and effective way to reduce the spread of illness.

## PREVENTING THE FLU

These tips can help to reduce the possibility of coming down with the flu and avoid passing the virus to others if you are infected.

- **Get your yearly flu shot** – it is the best way to protect yourself from getting the flu each year. Ask your doctor if you should have pneumococcal vaccination.
- **Good cough manners** – use tissues when coughing or sneezing and throw all used tissues in the garbage.
- **Wash your hands often and especially:**
  - After coughing or sneezing or blowing your nose;
  - After being in contact with someone who has the flu;
  - Before preparing or eating meals;
  - After using the toilet, and
  - After coming home from the office, school, mall or any public place.
- Do not visit people who have the flu if you can avoid it.
- Stay home if you are sick with the flu.
- Clean bathroom and kitchen counters and taps more frequently.
- If you rub your eyes or touch your nose and mouth – wash your hands.
- Do not share forks, spoons and knives.

## HAND WASHING STEPS



Wet hands



Soap  
(20 seconds)



Rinse



Turn off  
taps with  
towel

# Children with the Flu

Symptoms are the same as for adults, however their fever can often be as high as 39° - 40° C

## HOW TO CARE FOR YOUR CHILD AT HOME

- Let the child stay home while ill to rest and prevent the virus from spreading to others.
- Offer cool liquids often.
- Monitor your child's temperature and give acetaminophen (e.g. Tylenol) or ibuprofen (e.g. Advil) as recommended on the package. **DO NOT GIVE ASPIRIN or ASA** (Acetylsalicylic acid) to **CHILDREN OR TEENAGERS.**
- Use salt water nose drops or spray to treat a stuffy nose.
- Throw away tissues after wiping your child's nose and wash your hands right away.
- Wash your hands often and teach your child to wash hands often.

## TAKE YOUR CHILD TO A DOCTOR IF YOUR CHILD:

- Has heart or lung disease or other chronic illness which requires regular medical care;
- Has trouble breathing;
- Is less than 6 months old and has a fever higher than 38.5°;

- Is over 6 months old and has a fever of 39° (temperature taken under the armpit) or 40° (by mouth);
- Drinks so little that they are not peeing every 6 hours when awake;
- Has not had a wet diaper in 12 hours, or
- Symptoms improve then suddenly get worse.

## IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

Doctor \_\_\_\_\_

Hospital \_\_\_\_\_

## TAKE YOUR CHILD TO HOSPITAL EMERGENCY OR CALL 911 IF YOUR CHILD:

- Has severe trouble breathing not caused by a stuffy nose;
- Has any trouble breathing along with blue lips or skin;
- Is limp or unable to move;
- Is hard to wake up or is too quiet and not responding;
- Has a stiff neck;
- Seems confused;
- Has a seizure (convulsion/fit).

For free health advice from qualified registered nurses, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week **call *HealthLine* at 1-877-800-0002 or visit [www.healthlineonline.ca](http://www.healthlineonline.ca)**

## **PANDEMIC INFLUENZA**

Influenza viruses change continuously as they circulate around the world. Major changes associated with higher rates of illness and death occur periodically and are called pandemics. Although there is no pandemic human influenza strain in the world, there has been wide publicity in the past few years about the need for planning for one, and about a pandemic of bird (avian) influenza.

For individuals and families, the health behaviours that help to limit the spread of seasonal influenza and other types of respiratory viruses every year will be the same ones that will be useful in limiting the spread of a pandemic influenza strain:

- Staying home when you are ill with an infection,
- Coughing and sneezing into a sleeve or tissue, and
- Washing your hands to get the virus off your hands.

## **EMERGENCY PLANNING**

It is common sense to have enough important supplies in your house like food, medicines and basic household supplies, to last several days.

## **WHAT ELSE MAY HAPPEN DURING A PANDEMIC**

If a pandemic strain is not much worse than normal seasonal influenza there may not be any special measures necessary. If it is much worse, however, there may be special measures put in place temporarily.

These measures could include using different health care facilities than usual, working to ensure the sickest people are treated first, and that vaccines and antiviral drugs are distributed effectively. There may also be temporary restrictions on large gatherings. There will timely public notice of any action required.

## **SCHOOLS**

Children in large groups transmit respiratory viruses easily – this is a way that they build up immunity to common illnesses. During a flu pandemic, public health officials may recommend temporary school closures as a means of slowing the spread in some circumstances.

## **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

For a detailed approach to planning for yourself or your family in case of any emergency, please visit Public Safety Canada's website at [http://getprepared.ca/index\\_e.asp](http://getprepared.ca/index_e.asp).



Saskatchewan  
Health

**For more information on pandemic influenza visit the Public Health Agency of Canada's website at [www.influenza.gc.ca](http://www.influenza.gc.ca) or call toll-free to 1-800-454-8302**