

Management of Diagnosed Influenza in the Home

If you or someone in your home is sick:

Instructions for the sick person

- **Wash hands** frequently using soap and water or an alcohol hand sanitizer.
- **Keep your distance 1 metre (3 feet) from sick people.**
- Stay home for 7 days after onset of symptoms in adults, and 10 days after onset of symptoms in children.
- Cover coughs and sneezes by using a tissue or sleeve.
- Throw tissues in the garbage immediately after use and keep closed until garbage pick-up day.
- Drink plenty of clear fluids (at least eight, 8 ounce cups per day).
- Avoid contact with the rest of the family by using a separate bedroom and bathroom if possible. If bathroom must be shared, ensure you have your own towel.
- Don't share anything that goes in your mouth like utensils, drinking glasses and toothbrushes.
- Don't have visitors in the house.
- Follow the advice of your health care provider. You can also call Telehealth Ontario for advice (1-866-797-0000). Avoid the use of aspirin and aspirin-containing products for children and teenagers.
- Get help if you are sick and alone or if you are a single parent with sick children.

Instructions for caregivers

- If possible, only one family member should care for a sick person. Pregnant women should avoid providing care to others.
- Have as little close contact as possible with the sick person. Stay at least 3 feet away from the sick person if 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 soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer after each time you care for the sick person.
- Provide 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 normal.

When to see a doctor

Always call your doctor **before** visiting the office so you do not infect others.

Call a doctor if you have the flu and:

- You have a chronic illness like heart or lung disease.
- You do not start feeling better in 7 days.
- Symptoms become worse.
- You are elderly or frail.
- You have an illness that affects the immune system.
- You are taking medication that affects the immune system.

Seek Emergency Medical Care:

If the sick person:

Adult:

- Has difficulty breathing or has chest pain.
- Has purple or blue discolouration of the lips.
- Is vomiting and is unable to keep liquids down.
- Has signs of dehydration such as dizziness when standing, absence of urination, or in infants, a lack of tears when they cry.
- Has a seizure.
- Is less responsive than normal or becomes confused or disoriented.
- Is coughing up blood.

Children:

- Fast or laboured breathing when resting.
- Wheezing.
- Chest pain.
- Coughing up blood.
- Bluish or dark coloured lips or skin.
- Drowsiness so severe that the child cannot be roused.
- Severe crankiness, or not wanting to be held.
- Is limp or cannot move.
- Has a stiff neck.
- Has a seizure (convulsion).
- Symptoms improve and then suddenly become worse.
- Sick and not drinking fluids.
- Sick and not urinating (peeing). Should pee at least every 6 hours when awake.

Reference:

British Columbia Ministry of Health. *Self care during an influenza pandemic* (2005, November). Retrieved March 29, 2006, from, <http://www.bchealthguide.org/healthfiles/hfile94c.stm>
Middlesex-London Health Unit *Management of Influenza in the Home* (April 29, 2009).