



Fact Sheet: Caring for a Child with H1N1 Flu at Home

When caring for a child who is home sick with H1N1 Flu, the parent or adult needs to:

- Check with the child's health care provider about any special care that might be needed, such as if the child has a current medical condition, such as asthma or diabetes
- Check with their health care provider about whether the child should be given antiviral medications
- Keep the child home for 7 days after the start of illness and until the fever has been gone for at least 24 hours
- Make sure that the child gets plenty of rest
- Encourage the child to drink clear fluids (such as water, broth, sports drinks, electrolyte beverages for infants such as Pedialyte) to keep them from being dehydrated
- Wash your hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub often and especially after handling items, such as tissues, after they have been used by the sick child
- Prevent the child from having close contact with others – do not let them go to school, church or any public place while they are ill
- Be watchful for emergency warning signs that might indicate you need to seek medical attention for the child.

Emergency warning signs include:

- Has difficulty breathing or chest pain
- Has purple or blue discoloration of the lips
- Is vomiting and 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 seizures (for example, uncontrolled convulsions)
- Is less responsive than normal or becomes confused

Medications to Help Reduce Flu Symptoms:

Antiviral medications can sometimes help lessen influenza symptoms, but require a prescription. Most people do not need these antiviral drugs to fully recover from the flu. However, persons at higher risk for severe flu complications, or those with severe flu illness who require hospitalization, may benefit from antiviral medications early in the course of illness (within 72 hours). Antiviral medications are available for persons 1 year of age and older. Ask your healthcare provider whether you need antiviral medication.

Flu infections can lead to or occur with bacterial infections. Therefore, some people will also need to take antibiotics. More severe or prolonged illness or illness that seems to get better, but then gets worse again, may be an indication that a person has a bacterial infection. Check with your healthcare provider if you have concerns.



Warning! Do *not* give aspirin (acetylsalicylic acid) to children or teenagers who have the flu; this can cause a rare but serious illness called Reye's syndrome. For more information about Reye's Syndrome, visit the National Institute of Health website at http://www.ninds.nih.gov/disorders/reyes_syndrome/reyes_syndrome.htm

- Check ingredient labels on over-the-counter cold and flu medications to see if they contain aspirin.
- Children and teenagers with the flu can take medicines **without** aspirin, such as acetaminophen (Tylenol®) and ibuprofen (Advil®, Motrin®, Nuprin®), to relieve symptoms as per the medication directions.
- Children younger than 2 years of age should not be given over-the-counter cold medications without first speaking with a healthcare provider.
- The safest care for flu symptoms in children younger than 2 years of age is using a cool-mist humidifier and a suction bulb to help clear away mucus.
- Fevers and aches can be treated with acetaminophen (Tylenol®) or ibuprofen (Advil®, Motrin®, Nuprin®).
- Over-the-counter cold and flu medications used according to the package instructions may help lessen some symptoms such as cough and congestion. Importantly, these medications will not lessen how infectious a person is.
- Check the ingredients on the package label to see if the medication already contains acetaminophen or ibuprofen before taking additional doses of these medications—don't double dose! Patients with kidney disease or stomach problems should check with their health care provider before taking any medications they are unsure of.
- Check with your health care provider or pharmacist if you are taking other over-the-counter or prescription medications not related to the flu. For more information on products for treating flu symptoms, see the FDA website: http://www.fda.gov/fdac/features/2005/105_buy.html

Placement of the sick person

- Keep the sick person in a room separate from the common areas of the house. (For example, a spare bedroom with its own bathroom, if that's possible.)
- Unless necessary for medical care, persons with the flu should not leave the home when they have a fever or during the time that they are most likely to spread their infection to others (7 days after onset of symptoms in adults. Children may pass the virus for longer than 7 days).
- If persons with the flu need to leave the home (for example, for medical care), they should cover their nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing and wear a loose-fitting (surgical) mask if available.
- Have the sick person wear a surgical mask if they need to be in a common area of the house near other persons.
- If possible, sick persons should use a separate bathroom. This bathroom should be cleaned daily with household disinfectant (see below).



Protect other persons in the home

- The sick person should not have visitors other than caregivers. A phone call is safer than a visit.
- If possible, have only one adult in the home take care of the sick person.
- Avoid having pregnant women care for the sick person. (Pregnant women are at increased risk of influenza-related complications and immunity can be suppressed during pregnancy).
- All persons in the household should clean their hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub frequently, including after every contact with the sick person or the person's room or bathroom.
- Use paper towels for drying hands after hand washing or dedicate cloth towels to each person in the household. For example, have different colored towels for each person.
- If possible, consideration should be given to maintaining good ventilation in shared household areas (e.g., keeping windows open in restrooms, kitchen, bathroom, etc.).
- Antivirals can be used to prevent the flu, so check with your healthcare provider to see if some persons in the home should use antiviral medications.

If you are the caregiver

- Masks or 'N95' respirators should be worn when coming face-to-face with the sick person .
- When holding small children who are sick, place their chin on your shoulder so that they will not cough in your face.
- Clean your hands with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand rub after you touch the sick person or handle used tissues, or laundry.
- Caregivers might catch flu from the person they are caring for and then the caregiver might be able to spread the flu to others before the caregiver shows symptoms. Therefore, the caregiver should wear a mask when they leave their home to keep from spreading flu to others in case they are in the early stages of infection.
- Talk to your health care provider about taking antiviral medication to prevent the caregiver from getting the flu.
- **Monitor yourself and household members for flu symptoms (such as increased temperature) and contact a telephone hotline or health care provider if symptoms occur.**

Household Cleaning, Laundry, and Waste Disposal

- Throw away tissues and other disposable items used by the sick person in the trash. Wash your hands after touching used tissues and similar waste.
- Keep surfaces (especially bedside tables, surfaces in the bathroom, and toys for children) clean by wiping them down with a household disinfectant according to directions on the product label.



- Linens, eating utensils, and dishes belonging to those who are sick do not need to be cleaned separately, but importantly these items should not be shared without washing thoroughly first.
- Wash linens (such as bed sheets and towels) by using household laundry soap and tumble dry on a hot setting. Avoid “hugging” laundry prior to washing it to prevent contaminating yourself. Clean your hands with soap and water or alcohol-based hand rub right after handling dirty laundry.
- Eating utensils should be washed either in a dishwasher or by hand with water and soap.

Information in this document is based upon recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Hotline (1-800-CDC-INFO) is available in English and Spanish, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week or on the Internet at http://www.cdc.gov/H1N1flu/guidance_homecare.htm.