

How to Care for Someone with Influenza

REST, HYDRATE, WATCH

Rest is very important. Keep the ill person as comfortable as possible.

Keep the person **hydrated**.

- Offer small amounts of fluid frequently, even if the ill person does not feel thirsty
- Watch for signs of dehydration. Someone who is dehydrated may have weakness or unresponsiveness, or decreased output of urine
- See the “Fluids and Nutrition section” below for information about what to do if the patient is vomiting.

Watch for complications. Call a doctor right away if the ill person:

- Has difficulty breathing or fast breathing
- Has a bluish color to the skin or lips
- Begins coughing up blood
- Complains of pain or pressure in the chest
- Shows signs of dehydration and cannot take enough fluids
- Appears confused or does not respond appropriately
- Has convulsions
- Gets worse after appearing to improve
- Is an infant younger than 2 months old with fever, poor feeding, urinating less than 3 times per day, or other signs of illness

MEDICATIONS

Use ibuprofen or acetaminophen or other measures for fever, sore throat and general discomfort.

Do not use aspirin in children or teenagers with influenza because it can cause Reye’s syndrome, a life-threatening illness

FLUIDS AND NUTRITION

Babies who are breast-fed and vomiting can continue to nurse, but offer smaller amounts.

If the ill person is not eating solid foods, include fluids that contain sugars and salts, such as broth, sports drinks (diluted half and half with water) and sodas, but not diet drinks.

If the patient is vomiting, do not give any fluid or food for at least 1 hour. Then offer a clear fluid in very small amounts. Let the stomach rest for an hour after each time the person vomits before giving more fluid.

Babies who are breast-fed and vomiting can continue to nurse, but offer smaller amounts.

Preventing the Spread of Flu

WHAT CAREGIVERS CAN DO IN THE HOME:

Physically separate influenza patients from other people as much as possible.

Designate one person in the household as the main caregiver for the ill person.

Watch for influenza symptoms in other household members.

WHAT EVERYONE IN THE HOUSEHOLD CAN DO:

Wash hands with soap and water or alcohol-based hand cleanser after each contact with an influenza patient or with objects in the area where the patient is located.

Don't touch your eyes, your nose, or your mouth without first washing your hands for 20 seconds. Wash hands before and after using the bathroom.

Place tissues used by the ill patient in a bag and throw away with other household waste.

Clean counters and other areas in the home regularly using everyday cleaning products.

PREVENT THE SPREAD OF ILLNESS IN THE COMMUNITY

Stay at home if you are sick.

If the ill person must leave home, he or she should wear a surgical mask, if available, and take the following steps:

Cover the mouth and nose when coughing and sneezing, using tissues or the crook of the elbow instead of the hands.

Dispose of tissues in the nearest waste bin after use or carry a small plastic bag for used tissues.

Wash hands with soap and water or alcohol-based hand cleanser after covering a cough or sneeze, wiping your nose, and handling contaminated objects.

Only people who are essential for patient care or support should enter a home where someone is ill with pandemic flu unless they have already had the illness

KNOW THE SYMPTOMS OF THE FLU:

- Sudden onset of illness
- Fever higher than 100.4° F (38° C)
- Chills
- Cough
- Headache
- Sore throat
- Stuffy nose
- Muscle aches
- Feeling of weakness and/or exhaustion
- Diarrhea, vomiting, abdominal pain