

Management of Influenza in the Home

Instructions for the sick person

- A sick person should stay home until they are feeling better and are fever free for 24 hours. Health care workers should stay home until 24 hours after all symptoms other than a mild cough have resolved, typically 5 to 8 days.
Note: A cough can persist for weeks after influenza. If cough is the only remaining symptom, isolation is not needed.
- Avoid contact with the rest of the family by using a separate bedroom and bathroom if possible. If the bathroom must be shared, ensure that you have your own towel.
- If possible, wear a surgical mask if you must be in contact with family members. Do not re-use masks.
- Cough into a tissue or your sleeve. Discard tissues immediately.
- Clean hands frequently using soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub, and always after coughing, sneezing or touching your nose or mouth.
- Do not share anything that goes into your mouth, such as eating utensils, drinking glasses and toothbrushes.
- Do not have visitors in the house during the illness.
- If you need to leave the house for a medical appointment, wear a surgical mask. Masks may be available at pharmacies, medical surgical supplies vendors, or hardware stores. See the advice below on when to seek medical care.
- 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 in children and teenagers as Reyes Syndrome, a potentially fatal illness, can result from the treatment of influenza with aspirin in these age groups.

Instructions for caregivers

- If possible, only one family member should care for a sick person. Pregnant women should avoid providing care to those who are ill, if it is possible.
- Have as little close contact as possible with the sick person. Stay at least 2 meters or 6 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.
- Wear a surgical mask if you must be in direct contact with a sick person. Masks may be available at medical surgical supplies vendors, pharmacies or hardware stores. Whenever you take the mask off, throw it out. Do not re-use masks.
- Clean hands frequently with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub and after each time you care for the sick person or you remove your mask.

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- Provide extra cleaning in frequently touched areas of the house (table tops, keyboards, door knobs, counter tops, remote controls, telephone handsets, light switches, etc). Disinfectant wipes are useful to keep on hand. Dishwashing and laundry should be done as normal.

Instructions for all household contacts

- Limit activities in the community to only what is essential. If you must go to work or school, discuss this matter with the Communicable Disease Team at KFL&A Public Health.
- Watch for symptoms of influenza: fever, cough, sore throat, sore muscles, joint pain, fatigue, and sometimes diarrhea and vomiting; the last one is more common in children.
- At the first sign of illness, stay at home and seek medical advice if your illness is severe or unusual. You can also call TeleHealth Ontario for advice 1-866-797-0000.

You should call your health care provider immediately if you experience flu symptoms and you:

- are pregnant
- have heart or lung disease
- have any other chronic health problem that requires regular medical attention
- live in a remote or isolated community
- are elderly or frail; or
- have an illness or are receiving treatments that might affect your immune system.

Seek emergency medical care if the sick person has any of the following symptoms:

- Difficulty breathing or chest pain
- Purple or blue discoloration of the lips
- Vomiting and inability to keep liquids down
- Signs of dehydration such as dizziness when standing, absence of urination, or in infants, a lack of tears when they cry
- Seizure
- Reduced responsiveness or confusion
- Severe illness with other symptoms

For more information, contact KFL&A Public Health at 613-549-1232 or 1-800-267-7875.