

# HOW TO LOOK AFTER SOMEONE WHO IS ILL WITH THE H1N1 FLU VIRUS

If someone in your home or community becomes sick, there are ways to care for them and reduce the risk of spread.

There are 10 steps to help an ill person, while protecting yourself and others from getting ill.

## 1. Minimize contact with the ill person.

- Provide care and comfort for the sick person, but do not stay with them at all times.
- Be sure to practice good basic hygiene such as washing your hands with soap and water immediately after exposure to the sick person or things they have touched.

## 2. Sick people should stay in their own room, so they do not spread the virus elsewhere in the house.

- Encourage them to rest.
- Restrict visitors unless necessary; use telephone, email, or letters instead.

## 3. The sick person should wear a simple surgical mask when someone is in the room with them (to stop the spread of infection).

- Encourage the use of a tissue when coughing or sneezing, if the sick person cannot tolerate a mask.

## 4. Consider wearing a simple surgical mask and safety glasses (or wrap-around sports glasses) if you are going to be in close contact with and caring for the sick person (within two metres).

## 5. Clean your hands regularly with soap and water or alcohol-based hand gel—even if they don't look dirty:

- Before and after putting on a mask before being close to someone who is sick;
- after being in a sick person's room;
- after touching anything that a sick person has touched (such as dishes, towels, clothes, or removing trash);
- Before you eat; or,
- Before touching your eyes, nose or mouth.

## 6. Keep the sick person's things separate from others

- Provide the sick person with their own towel, face cloth, and toothbrush.
- Wash dishes, dirty laundry and towels with hot water and soap as soon as you take them out of the room.
- Clean your hands afterwards and avoid touching your eyes.

## 7. Anything a sick person touches should be handled carefully

- Line their garbage with a plastic bag, so you don't need to touch the contents. Ideally, have a garbage bin with a foot pedal, so that you do not need to touch the garbage to put something in it.
- Disinfect door knobs and light switches by cleaning them with a mixture that is 1 part bleach and 10 parts water.

## 8. Give the sick person fluids, nutritious foods, Do not smoke around the person..

- Offer warm drinks, such as tea with honey and lemon, or chicken soup, which can be very soothing for those whose throats may be sore from coughing. They may not be hungry at first, but simple foods such as cooked oatmeal, or mashed vegetables may be welcomed.
- Cigarettes should be avoided; they are especially hard on the lungs when there is an infection. People shouldn't smoke around them either as second hand smoke is also harmful.

## 9. Treat the fever and cough.

- Fever often comes with chills or aches and pains. Acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Motrin) every 4-6 hours may help to bring down the fever and take away the aches. **Do not give aspirin to children** as it has been linked to Reye's Syndrome.
- A cool face cloth to the face and neck or over the whole body can help the fever too.
- If antiviral medications have been ordered, ensure they get it twice a day.

**10. Be on alert for complications.** Most people on medications and with rest will begin to feel better after a few days. However, be on the lookout. Sometimes complications, such as asthma or pneumonia, or another problem can occur that may mean they need to have a health assessment again. **Take their temperature at least daily.**

Here are some danger signs to look for:

- Starts to feel better, then the fever returns;
- Wheezing, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing;
- Coughing up lots of spit or sputum
- Blood in the sputum or spit;
- Chest pain;
- Hard to wake up, unusually quiet or unresponsive;
- Strange thoughts or actions; and,
- New onset of diarrhea, vomiting or abdominal pain.

If any of these signs occur, call a health care provider and get advice about what to do.