

Caring for an Individual with a Suspected Case of Influenza in a Community Care Setting

1. What are the signs and symptoms of this virus in people?

The symptoms of the H1N1 and seasonal influenza virus in people are fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. A significant number of people who have been infected with the H1N1 influenza virus also have reported diarrhea and vomiting.

2. If there is an individual who is suspected of having the H1N1 or seasonal influenza virus

Please refer to the attachment on this e-mail entitled: Coughing Hygiene and Hand Washing Technique

Please contact the primary care physician of the sick individual service recipient and report the findings. If the primary care physician is not available, then please seek out an emergency room or urgent care center to evaluate the person.

When providing care to a household member who is sick with influenza, the most important ways to protect yourself and others who are not sick are to:

1. Keep the sick person away from other people as much as possible
2. Remind the sick person to cover their coughs, and clean their hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub often, especially after coughing and/or sneezing.
3. Have everyone in the household clean their hands often, using soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub.
4. Ask your healthcare provider if household contacts of the sick person—particularly those contacts who may have chronic health conditions—should take antiviral medications such as oseltamivir (Tamiflu®) or zanamivir (Relenza®) to prevent the flu.
5. 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. Keep the sickroom door closed.
6. 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. **CDC recommends that people with influenza-like illness remain at home until at least 24 hours after they are free of fever (100° F [37.8°C]), or signs of a fever without the use of fever-reducing medications.** This is a change from the previous recommendation that all persons stay home for 7 days after illness onset or until 24 hours after the resolution of symptoms, whichever was longer. The new recommendation applies to camps, schools, businesses, mass gatherings, and other community settings where the majority of people are not at increased risk for influenza complications. This guidance does not apply to health care settings where the exclusion period should be continued for 7 days from symptom onset or until the resolution of symptoms, whichever is longer.
8. If persons with the flu needs 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.
9. Have the sick person wear a surgical mask if they need to be in a common area of the house near other persons.
10. If possible, sick persons should use a separate bathroom. This bathroom should be cleaned daily with household disinfectant.
11. The sick person should not have visitors other than caregivers. A phone call is safer than a visit.
12. If possible, have only one adult in the home take care of the sick person.

13. 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.
14. Avoid having persons aged 65 or older care for the person.
15. Avoid having adults with asthma, chronic pulmonary, cardiovascular, hepatic, hematological, neurologic, neuromuscular, metabolic disorders such as diabetes, or immunosuppressed people care for the ill person.
16. 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.
17. 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.
18. If possible, consideration should be given to maintaining good ventilation in shared household areas (e.g., keeping windows open in restrooms, kitchen, bathroom, etc.).
19. 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.
20. Avoid being face-to-face with the sick person.
21. When holding small children who are sick, place their chin on your shoulder so that they will not cough in your face.
22. 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.
23. Talk to your health care provider about taking antiviral medication to prevent the caregiver from getting the flu.
24. Monitor yourself and household members for flu symptoms and contact a health care provider if symptoms occur.
25. Avoid close contact (less than about 6 feet away) with the sick person as much as possible.
26. 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.
27. 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.
28. 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.
29. 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.
30. Eating utensils should be washed either in a dishwasher or by hand with water and soap.

3. Facemasks and Respirators

Please refer to the webpage provided in the e-mail to which this document is attached.

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