

H1N1 “Tips For At-Home Care”

- 1. Minimize contact with the ill person.** Provide care and comfort for the sick person, but do not stay with them at all times (providing this is age appropriate). Be sure to practice good basic hygiene such as washing your hands immediately after being with 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 or email instead. The sick person should not go out in public or return to daycare/school or work **until they have been system free for 48 hours or for 7 days after the symptoms begin.**
- 3. The person should use good cough hygiene when someone is in the room with them.** This means coughing and sneezing into a sleeve or arm or wearing a simple surgical mask - if no mask is available it is encouraged to use a tissue or sleeve when sneezing.
- 4. You should wear a simple surgical mask (if available) and, if possible, safety glasses (or wrap-around sports glasses) if you are going to be in close contact with sick person (within 2 meters).**
- 5. Should masks be worn in public places?** The Public Health Agency of Canada does not recommend the public wear surgical masks to protect against H1N1. Evidence shows that masks are not effective in preventing the spread of influenza in the public. People often wear them incorrectly, or contaminate them when putting them on and taking them off, which could increase the risk of illness.
- 6. Clean your hands regularly with soap and water or alcohol-based hand gel- even if they are not visibly dirty:**
 - 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
 - before touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
- 7. Keep the sick person’s things separate from others.** Provide the sick person with their own towel, face cloth and tooth brush. Keep surfaces (especially bedside tables, surfaces in the bathroom, and toys for children) clean by wiping them down with a household disinfectant according to the 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. Eating utensils should be washed either in a dishwasher or by hand with water and soap. Wash linens (such as bed sheets and towels) by using household laundry soap and tumble dry on a hot setting. Avoid “hugging” or shaking 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.

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8. **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 you do not have to touch the garbage to put something in it. Disinfect door knobs, taps, telephones, and light switches by cleaning them with a commercially available cleanser or a mixture that is 1 part bleach and 10 parts water (bleach may corrode stainless steel).

9. **Give the sick person age-appropriate fluids and nutritious foods, and ensure no one smokes around them.** 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. They may not be hungry at first, but simple foods such as cooked oatmeal, or mashed vegetables may be welcomed. Smoking should be avoided, as this is especially hard on the lungs when there is an infection. People should not smoke around them as second-hand smoke is also harmful.

10. **Treat the fever and cough.** Fever often comes with chills or aches and pains. Acetaminophen or ibuprofen every 4-6 hrs 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 body can help the fever. **Avoid overuse of cough suppressants for adults and children over 6 years. Do not give decongestant or cough suppressants to children under the age of 6 years.**

11. **Be on the alert for complications.** Most people will begin to feel better after a few days. Sometimes complications, such as pneumonia, can occur that may require a health assessment. Asthma, diabetes and heart disease can also worsen. Measure temperature daily and watch for the danger signs:
 - starts to feel better, then the fever returns and illness worsens
 - wheezing, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
 - blood in the phlegm
 - chest pain
 - hard to wake up, unusually quiet or unresponsive
 - strange thoughts or actions
 - 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.

Information taken from July 28th, 2009 H1N1 Toolkit for Community Based Health Care Providers - provided by: NS Health Promotion and Protection