



Caring for People with Flu-like Symptoms

Getting to know the flu

Symptoms of the flu

- Sudden onset of fever (chills) and cough, plus one or more of the following: sore throat, headache, sore muscles and joints, and/or tiredness
- Diarrhea and vomiting may occur, particularly in children
- Note: Fever sometimes not present in young children and elderly

Symptoms of worsening illness

- Shortness of breath, chest pain, wheezing
- Coughing up bloody sputum
- Purple or blue discolouration of the lips
- Vomiting and unable to keep liquids down
- Signs of dehydration, such as dizziness when standing, dry mouth, decreased peeing
- Extreme drowsiness, confusion or disorientation
- Fever that does not go away or comes back after four (4) to five (5) days

People at higher risk for complications

- Children less than 5 years of age
- Adults 65 years of age and over (at risk for seasonal influenza, but not for H1N1)
- Women who are pregnant or had a baby in the past 4 weeks
- People who are very overweight
- People with the following medical conditions: lung problems (including asthma), heart, problems, diabetes, cancer, problems with your immune system caused by disease or medications (including HIV), kidney disease, problems with your blood (such as anemia), neurologic problems, less than 18 years of age and taking daily aspirin

When you should seek medical attention

- **If you start to experience flu symptoms:** Stay home from work/school until the fever has been absent for 24 hours and you feel well enough to resume normal activities.
- **If symptoms persist for more than five days:** Please consult Telehealth, or your family physician or local walk-in clinic.
- **If symptoms worsen:** Please go to the emergency department at your local hospital.

Important phone numbers

- **Telehealth Ontario**—1-866-797-0000
- **Durham Health Connection Line**—905-666-6241 or 1-800-841-2729
- **Toronto Public Health**—416-338-7600

Letting the flu run its course

- **Day 1—3:** Sudden appearance of fever, headache, muscle pain and weakness also dry cough, sore throat and stuffed nose (but overshadowed by previous symptoms).
- **Day 4:** Fever and muscle aches decrease. Hoarse dry or sore throat, cough and possible mild chest discomfort become noticeable.
- **Day 8:** Symptoms decrease. Cough and tiredness may last 1—2 weeks more.

Taking care of yourself when you have the flu

- **Stay home and rest.** Probably, you will feel very weak and tired until your temperature returns to normal (about three days), and resting will provide comfort and allow your body to use its energy to fight the infection. Avoid contact with the rest of the family, and try to avoid having visitors in the house. Ensure you have your own towel in the bathroom. If you need to be close to others, consider wearing a surgical mask.
- **Drink plenty of fluids.** Extra fluids are needed to replace those lost because of the fever (sweating). Liquids also help loosen mucus. Try to drink a glass of juice/water or an electrolyte solution every hour while you are awake. Try to avoid drinks with caffeine as they may make you more dehydrated.
- **Wash your hands often.** Use warm water and liquid soap or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- **Take acetaminophen or ibuprofen** (as recommended on the package) in order to bring down your fever and ease your muscle pain (unless your doctor says otherwise).
- **Gargle with warm water to ease a sore throat.** Sugarless hard candy also helps, as do lozenges.
- **Do not smoke. Avoid alcohol.**
- **Cover your nose and mouth with tissues when you cough or sneeze**, and throw the tissues in the garbage immediately afterwards. Use saline nose drops or spray (ones that contain salt water but no medication) to help soothe or clear a stuffed nose.
- **Take any medication, as prescribed, until completed.** If you buy medicine at the drug store to treat your symptoms (“over the counter” medications), check with the pharmacist to see if it’s the best one for you. Mention if you have a chronic illness or are taking substances that may trigger an unpleasant reaction. Avoid the ingredient, Phenylpropanolamine (PPA), which has been linked with strokes.

For more information about seasonal influenza and the H1N1 flu virus, please visit Rouge Valley’s online resource page at www.rougevalley.ca/h1n1.