

Seasonal and H1N1 Flu Tips: Taking Care of Sick Persons at Home

The H1N1 influenza (flu) virus, formerly known as Swine Flu, is currently causing illness in people throughout the United States and countries around the world, causing the World Health Organization to declare a pandemic. The following information was obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). We encourage you to keep up-to-date by visiting www.cdc.gov. The following information can be used for seasonal flu and H1N1 flu.

HOW FLU IS SPREAD: Flu viruses are spread from person to person through droplets from a cough or sneeze of an infected person. If you are caring for persons with flu:

- Check with their healthcare provider about any special care they might need if they are pregnant or have a health condition such as diabetes, heart disease, asthma, or emphysema.
- Check with their healthcare provider about whether they should take antiviral medications.
- Stay home for seven days after your symptoms begin or until you have been symptom-free for 24 hours, whichever is longer, except to seek medical care or for other necessities.
- Get plenty of rest.
- Drink clear fluids, such as water, broth, sports drinks (electrolyte beverages for infants) to keep from becoming dehydrated.
- Cover coughs and sneezes. Clean hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub frequently, especially after using tissues and after coughing or sneezing into hands.
- Wear a facemask – if available and tolerable – when sharing common spaces with other household members to help prevent spreading the virus to others. This is especially important if other household members are at high risk for complications from influenza. Avoid close contact with others – do not go to work or school while ill.
- Be watchful for emergency warning signs (see page 4) that might indicate you need to seek medical attention.



4800 Ledgewood Drive, Medina OH 44256
330-723-9688 1-888-723-9688
www.medinahhealth.org

Services are partially funded by your local health levy.

Steps to Lessen the Spread of Flu in the Home

IF SOMEONE IN YOUR HOME IS SICK

- Keep the sick person away from other people as much as possible, especially others who are at high risk for complications from influenza.
- Remind the sick person to cover coughs and clean hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub often, especially after coughing or sneezing.
- Have everyone in the household clean hands often, using soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub. Children may need reminders or help keeping their hands clean.
- If you are in a high risk group for complications from influenza, you should attempt to avoid close contact (within six feet) with household members who are sick with influenza—this is called Social Distancing.
- If close contact with a sick individual is unavoidable, consider wearing a facemask, if available and tolerable. Infants should not be cared for by sick family members.



PLACEMENT OF THE SICK PERSON

- 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.
- Unless necessary for medical care or other necessities, people who are sick with an influenza-like illness should stay home and minimize contact with others, including avoiding travel, for 7 days after their symptoms begin, or until they have been symptom-free for 24 hours, whichever is longer. Children, especially younger children, might potentially be contagious for longer periods.
- If persons with the flu need to leave the home (for example, for medical care), they should wear a facemask, if available and tolerable, and cover their nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing.
- Have sick persons wear a facemask – if available and tolerable – if they need to be in a common area of the house near other persons.
- If possible, sick persons should use a separate bathroom. This bathroom should be cleaned daily with household disinfectant.

IF YOU ARE THE CAREGIVER

- Avoid being face-to-face with the sick person.
- When holding small children who are sick, place their chin on your shoulder so that they will not cough in your face.
- 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.
- If you are at high risk of influenza-associated complications, you should not be the designated caregiver, if possible.
- If you are in a high risk group for complications from influenza, you should attempt to avoid close contact (within 6 feet) with household members who are sick with influenza. Designate a person who is not at high risk of flu-associated complications as the primary caregiver of household members who are sick with influenza, if at all possible. If close contact with a sick individual is unavoidable, consider wearing a facemask, if available and tolerable.
- **Monitor yourself and household members for flu symptoms and contact a telephone hotline or health care provider if symptoms occur.**



HOUSEHOLD CLEANING, LAUNDRY, AND WASTE DISPOSAL

- 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.
- 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.
- Linens, eating utensils, and dishes used by those who are sick do not need to be cleaned separately, but importantly, these items should not be shared without first washing thoroughly.
- Wash linens (such as bed sheets and towels) by using household laundry soap and hot water, and tumble dry on a hot setting. Avoid “hugging” laundry prior to washing to prevent contaminating yourself. Clean your hands with soap and water or alcohol-based hand rub right after handling dirty laundry.
- Eating utensils should be washed either in a dishwasher or by hand with hot water and soap.

EMERGENCY WARNING SIGNS

CHILDREN

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish or gray skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Not waking up or not interacting
- Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
- Flu-like symptoms that improve but then return with fever or worse cough

ADULTS

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Flu-like symptoms that improve but then return with fever or worse cough

PROTECT YOURSELF, YOUR FAMILY, AND YOUR COMMUNITY EVRY FLU SEASON

- Stay informed – www.cdc.gov or www.medicinahealth.org.
- Cover your nose and mouth when you cough or sneeze – use your sleeve or tissue.
- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water, especially after possible exposure to the flu virus. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth – germs spread this way.
- Get prepared—have an emergency preparedness kit and plan at home.
- Get your seasonal flu shot. Contact the Medina County Health Department, Division of Public Health Nursing for more details, or check our website for the latest flu clinic schedule.



4800 Ledgewood Drive, Medina OH 44256
330-723-9688 1-888-723-9688
www.medicinahealth.org