

## Home Care Guide for Influenza

### *Symptom and care log, Infection control measures for the home*

A person with influenza will often become ill very suddenly. Fever and the worst symptoms often last 3 days, but sometimes last as many as 8 days. The person may feel weak, tired, or less energetic than normal for weeks afterward, and may have a long-lasting hacking cough.

#### ***Common symptoms:***

- Fever—low (99 F) to high (104 F), usually for 3 days, but may persist for 4 to 8 days. Sometimes fever will go away and return a day later.
- Extreme fatigue
- Muscle and body aches
- Feeling very cold or having shaking chills
- Joint aches
- Headache (may be severe)
- Eye pain
- Sore throat
- Stuffed nose or runny nose
- Dry cough initially, may become a deep, hacking, and painful cough over the course of several days
- No appetite for food or desire to drink fluids

#### ***Supplies to have on hand:***

- Thermometer
- Acetaminophen or ibuprofen
- Cough suppressants/cough syrup
- Drinks—fruit juices, sports drinks, soda, tea
- Light foods—clear soups, crackers, applesauce
- Blankets; warm covers

#### ***Caring for a person with influenza:***

- Comfort measures
  - Have the patient rest in bed.
  - Allow the sick person to judge the amount of bed covers needed; when fever is high the person may feel very cold and want several blankets.
  - Give acetaminophen (Tylenol or other brand names) or ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin, or other brand names) according to the package label or a health care provider's direction to reduce fever, headache, and muscle, joint or eye pain.
- Fluids—give frequently, extremely important to replace body fluids that are lost as a result of fever.
- Feeding
  - Give light foods as the person wants; fluids are more important than food especially in the first days when the fever may be highest.

#### **When to seek additional medical advice:**

- If the person is short of breath or breathing rapidly at rest
- If the person's skin is dusky or bluish in color
- If the person is disoriented ("out of it")
- If the person is so dizzy or weak that standing is difficult (in a person who was able to walk before the illness)
- If the person has not urinated in 12 or more hours

## Symptom and Care Log for Home Care

*(Copy, fill out, and bring log sheets to health care provider visits)*

Name of patient \_\_\_\_\_ Name of health care provider \_\_\_\_\_

Date	Time	Observations*	Temperature	Medications

\*How the person looks; what the person is doing; fluids or foods taken since the last observation

## **Infection Control Measures For the Home to Prevent Spreading Of Infection**

- Persons who have not been exposed to pandemic influenza and who are not essential for the sick person's care or support should not enter the home – especially while the sick person still has a fever.
- If unexposed persons must enter the home, they should avoid close contact with the patient.
- Sick persons should be separated from other household members as much as possible. Consider designating one person as the primary care provider.
- Household members should be vigilant for the development of influenza symptoms in themselves. Consult with health care providers to determine whether a pandemic influenza vaccine (if available) or preventive antiviral medications should be considered.
- The sick person should follow respiratory hygiene/cough etiquette—cover the mouth and nose when coughing and sneezing.
- Care providers should wash their hands with soap and water, or use alcohol based hand cleaners, before and after attending to sick persons.
- Care providers may wear surgical or procedure-type masks during interactions with the sick person if masks are available.
- The sick person may wear a surgical or procedure-type mask when others are around if masks are available and the sick person can tolerate wearing it.
- Sick persons should not leave the home unless they must seek additional medical care during the period when they are most likely to be infectious to others, which is when they have a fever or for about 5 days after they first became ill.
- If the sick person must leave the household to see a health care provider, attempt to contact a health care provider by phone or email so that appropriate advice can be given and isolation arrangements can be made at the health care site. When movement outside the home is necessary the patient should follow respiratory hygiene/cough etiquette and should wear a mask if available and can be tolerated.
- Tissues used by the ill patient should be placed in a bag and disposed with other household waste.
- Eating utensils should be washed in a dishwasher or by hand with soap and warm water; other separation or sterilization is not necessary.
- Laundry may be washed in a standard washing machine with warm or cold water and detergent. It is not necessary to separate soiled linen and laundry used by a patient with influenza from other household laundry. Care should be used when handling soiled laundry (i.e., avoid “hugging” the laundry) to avoid self-contamination. Wash hands after handling soiled laundry.
- Surfaces in the home should be cleaned using regular household cleaning sprays or solutions.

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