

# Caring for People with Influenza at Home



## Instructions for the sick person:

- Stay home until you do not have a fever and are feeling better. Health care workers who are ill should be off work for a minimum of 7 days from onset of symptoms; after which, they can return to work when their fever is gone and they are feeling better.
- Avoid contact with the rest of the family as much as possible. Ensure you have your own towel in the bathroom.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue. Use your sleeve if a tissue is not available. Discard used tissues right away and wash your hands.
- Wash hands frequently using warm water and pump soap or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Don't share anything that goes in your mouth such as unwashed utensils or drinking glasses and toothbrushes.
- Try to avoid having visitors in the house.
- If you need to leave the house for a medical appointment, try to minimize direct contact with others as much as possible. See below for when to seek medical care.
- Follow the advice of your health care provider or call Telehealth Ontario @ 1-866-797-0000.
- Avoid the use of aspirin and aspirin-containing products for children and teenagers.

## Instructions for caregivers:

- If possible, choose only one family member to care for a sick person. Pregnant women and people with medical problems may want to avoid providing direct care if possible.
- Try to maintain a distance of at least 2 metres (6 feet) between you and the sick person whenever possible.
- When holding a small child who is sick, place their chin on your shoulder so that they do not cough in your face.
- Wash your hands frequently with warm water and pump soap or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer before and after each time you care for the sick person.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Perform extra cleaning in frequently touched areas of the house (table tops, keyboards, door knobs, counter tops, remote controls, telephones, light switches, etc). Dishwashing and laundry can be done as usual.

## Instructions for all household contacts:

- Watch for symptoms that include: fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills, fatigue and sometimes diarrhea and vomiting for children.
- Stay home if you become ill (see 'Instructions for the sick person' above).

## Call a health care provider if the sick person:

- Has pre-existing medical conditions, is pregnant, is under 2 years of age or is 65 years of age and older;
- Has questions or concerns about his/her symptoms or overall health.

## Seek emergency care if the sick person:

- Has difficulty breathing (fast breathing for children) or has shortness of breath;
- Has chest pain;
- Has purple or blue discoloration of the lips or skin;
- Has severe or persistent vomiting;
- Has signs of dehydration such as dizziness when standing and/or absence of urination. A sign of dehydration in infants is a lack of tears when they cry and/or not drinking enough fluids;
- Has a seizure;
- Is less responsive than normal or becomes confused. Children may experience severe tiredness and irritability;
- Influenza-like symptoms become worse or improve but then return with fever and worse cough.

For additional information, please contact your health care provider or the Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit @ 613-345-5685 / 613-283-2740 / 1-800-660-5853 or visit [www.healthunit.org](http://www.healthunit.org)

# DO YOU THINK YOU HAVE INFLUENZA?

## When to Seek Medical Attention

### SYMPTOMS OF INFLUENZA:

- fever of more than 38°C and cough

#### AND (one or more of the following symptoms):

- sore throat
- shortness of breath/difficulty breathing
- fatigue
- aching muscles and/or joints

*(note: young children do not always have a fever; some people may also have diarrhea and vomiting)*

### INSTRUCTIONS TO HELP YOU FEEL BETTER AT HOME

- Stay home until your fever has been gone for 24 hrs and you can resume normal activities.
- A dry cough, in the absence of other symptoms, may continue for days to weeks and is not a reason to stay home.
- Avoid contact with the rest of the family as much as possible. If you need to be close to others, consider wearing a surgical mask.
- Cough into a tissue or your sleeve. Discard used tissues immediately.
- Wash hands often using soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Don't share personal items or drinks. Make sure you have your own towel in the bathroom.
- Try to avoid having visitors in the house.
- Children and teenagers: avoid the use of aspirin and aspirin-containing products.

Contact Telehealth Ontario at 1-866-797-0000 if you have any additional questions.

### Call your health care provider if you have any influenza-like symptoms and:

- Are pregnant
- Have heart or lung disease
- Have chronic health problems that require regular medical attention
- Are over 65 years of age
- Have an illness that affects your immune system such as cancer or HIV/AIDS
- Are under 5 years of age

#### What to do:

- Consult your health care provider as soon as symptoms develop.
- If you have no health care provider call Telehealth Ontario at 1-866-797-0000.
- Inform your health care provider that you have symptoms of influenza before or as soon as you arrive so that proper precautions can be taken to prevent spread to others.

### Are your symptoms getting worse?

#### Symptoms of worsening illness include:

- Difficulty breathing/shortness of breath when doing very little or resting or chest pain
- Continuous vomiting or severe diarrhea with signs of dehydration such as dizziness when standing, dry mouth and tongue and/or decreased peeing
- Confusion, disorientation
- Seizures
- Stiff neck or sensitive to light
- Fever returning after a few days of feeling better

#### In children also watch for:

- Blue lips, cold feet, cold hands and/or toes, sudden paleness
- Extreme lack of energy; limp or unconscious

#### What to do:

- Go to the nearest emergency department.
- If symptoms are severe, call 911.
- Inform the emergency department and/or ambulance attendants that you have symptoms of influenza so that proper precautions can be taken to prevent spread to others.

If in doubt, always call your health care provider or  
Telehealth Ontario at 1-866-797-0000