

Managing Influenza A (H1N1) Swine Flu

1. What to do if you have the flu

If you have the flu, it is important to:

- **stay home** and let a relative or friend know if you are at home alone
- **rest** in a separate room that has good ventilation and is away from other members of the household
- **don't share** anything that may spread flu
- **drink** small amounts of fluids often and keep your mouth clean and moist by cleaning teeth regularly
- **take drugs** that relieve pain and fever, e.g., paracetamol or ibuprofen. (Aspirin-type medications should not be used for children and young people.)
- **gargle** with a glass of warm water and/or suck on sugarless hard sweets or lozenges for sore throats
- **use saline drops or nasal spray or decongestants** for soothing and clearing the nose
- keep bedding and nightwear **clean and dry** if you are in bed
- **shower or bath regularly**, or use a cloth to wash with warm water and soap and make sure you **wash your hands often** for at least 20 seconds, drying them well afterwards or use antiseptic rubs
- **apply skin balm or moisturiser** to prevent your lips, nose and surrounding skin from drying out and cracking.

If you don't feel like **eating or drinking**:

- try light fluid-type nutritional snacks such as chicken soup or perhaps yoghurt
- don't worry if you can't handle food, but keep taking fluids, try an ice block or jelly.

If you aren't **drinking enough**, you may be dehydrated. You may:

- have no urine or very little, which will be a dark yellow colour
- feel confused or drowsy
- have dull eyes
- have dry skin that will have lost its elasticity (it won't spring back when you pinch it lightly)

If you find it **hard to breathe**:

- sit upright
- contact your doctor immediately.

If your condition worsens, seek medical advice by PHONING Healthline 0800 611 116 or your healthcare provider.

When to seek medical advice

Seek medical advice from Healthline 0800 611 116 or your healthcare provider BY PHONE if you, or the person you are caring for, has:

- been unwell for three or four days and are not getting any better or are feeling worse
- a high temperature that is not responding to attempts to reduce it
- difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- pain or pressure in the chest or stomach
- been coughing up bloody or green phlegm

- blue skin around the lips and/or blue skin on finger tips
- severe pain in the ear(s)
- severe vomiting
- difficulty waking up or feel disoriented or confused
- been experiencing fits or uncontrollable shaking
- started to feel better but then get a high fever and start to feel unwell again.

Dealing with the potential stress of ‘home’ isolation

Being in isolation can be stressful for several reasons: worries about the possible symptoms of the flu, the health of other household members, and time off from work are very common, along with possible difficulties sleeping. Feelings of worry and concern are a normal reaction to the unusual circumstances of home isolation.

Some ways to stay calm and relaxed during home isolation may include:

- Talking to, emailing, or texting friends and family members about how you’re feeling, both physically and non-physically.
- Identifying someone (friends, family, whanau, a caseworker) who can help you with practical considerations like getting food, paracetamol, etc delivered to your door without face-to-face contact.
- Discussing what time off from work will look like with your job or with your clients
- Making sure to get plenty of rest while at home, as well as maintaining good hygiene
- Finding ways to entertain yourself while in home isolation: reading books, watching movies, playing games, etc.

You may find it useful to read the news about the flu as a way of staying informed about the situation in New Zealand. However, we suggest you take a break from flu updates if you find you are getting more worried or anxious about the flu.

Managing Influenza A (H1N1) Swine Flu

2. Caring for someone with the flu

Lessen the spread of influenza in the home

When providing care to a household member who is sick with influenza, the best ways to protect yourself and others are to:

- keep the sick person away from other people as much as possible
- remind the sick person to cover their coughs and sneezes
- have everyone in the household clean their hands often
- ask your healthcare provider if others in your household – particularly those who are pregnant or have serious health conditions—should take antiviral medications.

Placement of the sick person

Keeping a sick person away from others in the household can help stop the spread of infection.

- Keep the sick person in a room separate from the common areas of the house and keep the sickroom door closed.
- Keep the sick person home unless they must go out for medical care. This will lessen the chance of spreading the virus to others.
- If people with influenza need to leave the home for medical care they should cover their nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing.
- If possible, sick people should use a separate bathroom. This bathroom should be cleaned daily with household disinfectant.

Protect yourself and other people in the home

The sick person should not have visitors other than caregivers.

- If possible, have only one adult in the home take care of the sick person.
- Avoid having pregnant women care for the sick person. Pregnant women are at increased risk of influenza-related complications and can have less immunity during pregnancy.
- Everyone in the household should clean their hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub frequently, including after every contact with the sick person or the person's room or bathroom.
- Use paper towels for drying hands after hand washing or dedicate cloth towels to each person in the household.

If you are well, but someone in your household has the flu:

- make sure you get enough rest yourself
- eat regularly
- drink fluids regularly
- exercise daily
- do not sleep in the same room as a sick person.

If you are the caregiver take care to protect your own health

Caregivers have an increased risk of becoming infected and need to take care to protect their own health.

- 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 must have close contact with the sick person, spend the least amount of time possible with them.

- Monitor yourself and household members for influenza symptoms and contact Healthline on 0800 611 116, or your health care provider, if symptoms become serious.

Household cleaning, laundry, and waste disposal

Take care with items in your home that may carry infection can help stop its spread.

- Throw away tissues and other disposable items used by the sick person. 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.
 - Linen, eating utensils, and dishes belonging to those who are sick do not need to be cleaned separately, but should not be shared without washing them thoroughly first.
 - Wash linen (such as bed sheets and towels) by using household laundry soap and, if possible, tumble dry them on a hot setting. 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.
-

Caring for a baby or child with the flu

Very young children and infants will probably have similar symptoms to adults but are often unable to explain what they are feeling. Younger children, especially those under six months, may also have diarrhoea, vomiting and stomach pain.

When a baby or child has the flu, it is important to:

- care for the child in a separate, well-ventilated room away from other members of the household
- give paracetamol or ibuprofen every four to six hours (for ibuprofen) for fever in the dose recommended on the package (unless your doctor says otherwise). (Do not give medication containing aspirin to children under 14.)
- offer cool fluids frequently, including water, fruit juice and milk. If the child is drowsy or not responding well, do not attempt to give fluids; instead, seek medical or nursing advice immediately
- dress the child in lightweight clothing
- give a lukewarm bath or shower. (Do not give cold baths or showers, which can be unpleasant and distressing for the child, and does not lower body temperature.)
- use salt-water drops (saline) to treat a stuffy nose
- keep the child at home and resting until they can no longer pass on the virus.

Antibiotics will not help children who have the flu and will only be prescribed for children who have complications as a result of the flu, such as pneumonia or an ear infection.

You should urgently seek medical or nursing attention when the baby or child in your care has the following symptoms.

For babies:

- Breathing is fast or noisy, possibly with wheezing or grunting
- Area below ribs sucks inward (instead of expanding as normal) as baby breathes in
- Has blue lips
- Is limp or unable to move
- Is drowsy or difficult to wake
- Is severely irritable
- Has a seizure (convulsion/fit)
- Is not drinking enough fluids, the nappies remain dry or there are fewer than four wet nappies in 24 hours
- Any of these symptoms improve and then suddenly become worse.

For children:

- Breathing is fast or noisy, possibly with wheezing or grunting
- Area below ribs sucks inward (instead of expanding as normal) as young child breathes in
- Has bluish or dark-coloured lips or skin, particularly on fingers and toes
- It is difficult or impossible to wake your child, they are very drowsy
- Severely irritable, not wanting to be held
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Not passing urine regularly (about every 6 hours when awake is normal)
- Symptoms improve and then suddenly become worse

Older children and teenagers usually have the same symptoms as adults.