

# *Taking Care of a Sick Person in Your Home*

Adapted from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, September 2009

The flu virus can cause a range of symptoms, most commonly: fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and extreme tiredness. Take the following steps if anyone at home has flu symptoms.

## **First things first**

- ◆ Call your health care provider, especially if anyone with flu symptoms:
  - Is pregnant
  - Has a chronic health condition such as diabetes, heart disease, or asthma
- ◆ **Stay at home** until at least 24 hours after being free of fever (100° F) or having signs of a fever without the use of fever-reducing medications.
- ◆ Get plenty of rest.
- ◆ Drink clear fluids (such as water, broth, sports drinks, or electrolyte beverages for infants) to stay hydrated.
- ◆ Cover coughs and sneezes.
- ◆ Wash hands with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand rub often. Always clean hands after using tissues, coughing, or sneezing into hands.
- ◆ Avoid close contact with others.
- ◆ Wear a facemask—if it’s possible — when sharing common spaces with other household members, especially if anyone at home is at higher risk for complications from the flu.

## **Find out about medicines to help with symptoms**

- ◆ Medicines called “antivirals” can help lessen flu symptoms. You can only get them by prescription. Most people don’t need antiviral medicines to get better, but those at-risk of complications might benefit. Ask your healthcare provider if you need them.
- ◆ Do **NOT** give aspirin to children or teenagers younger than 18 with the flu; it can cause a rare but serious illness. Learn about flu medications: [www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidance\\_homecare.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidance_homecare.htm).

## **Get medical help right away if anyone with the flu:**

- ◆ Has difficulty breathing or chest pain
- ◆ Has purple or blue lips
- ◆ Is vomiting and unable to keep liquids down
- ◆ Is dizzy, not able to urinate (“pee”) or, if an infant, doesn’t make tears when crying – all signs of dehydration
- ◆ Has seizures (uncontrolled convulsions)
- ◆ Becomes confused or less responsive

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## **Protect yourself if you are caring for a sick person at home:**

- ◆ Avoid face-to-face contact and being within six feet of the sick person.
- ◆ If you must have close contact, spend as little time as possible.
- ◆ Clean your hands well with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer after touching the sick person or things he/she used.
- ◆ Consider wearing a facemask or respirator if you must have close contact with a sick person. For more information on facemasks and respirators, visit <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/masks.htm>.

## **Prevent the spread of flu in your home**

- ◆ Keep sick persons away from others as much as possible.
- ◆ Have everyone wash hands often with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub, especially after coughing, sneezing or using a tissue.
- ◆ Use paper towels for drying hands after hand washing or have separate towels for each person.
- ◆ Throw used tissues and other disposable items in the trash and then wash your hands.
- ◆ Wipe surfaces often with combination detergent and disinfectant product. Check the label to see if it is effective against the Influenza A virus.
- ◆ Wash bed sheets, towels, and other linens by using household laundry soap and tumble dry on a hot setting.
- ◆ Clean your hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub right after handling dirty laundry.
- ◆ **Watch for flu symptoms in your home. Contact a telephone hotline or health care provider if they occur.**

## **More Information**

- ◆ For more information on caring for a sick person in your home, visit [www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidance\\_homecare.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidance_homecare.htm).
- ◆ For more information about the H1N1 virus visit [www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu](http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu).
- ◆ The Virginia Department of Health operates a toll-free H1N1 hotline, Mondays through Fridays, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at **1-877-ASK-VDH3** (1-877-275-8343).

**LET'S ALL GET READY!**

CONTACT YOUR LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT WHAT OUR COMMUNITY IS DOING