

HOME ISOLATION**Instructions for Persons with Fever and Cough to Reduce Spread of Influenza in the Home****10/27/09**

Influenza is a very contagious respiratory infection that is caused by a virus. The best way to protect yourself and your family against the flu is to **get vaccinated**. Talk to your doctor or visit nyc.gov/flu or call 311 for information.

Influenza is easily spread when an infected person coughs or sneezes. If you or someone you live with has flu-like symptoms (fever and a cough or sore throat), sit down with the members of your household and go over the following recommendations to help the sick person get better and prevent others from becoming ill. These actions help prevent the spread of both seasonal and H1N1 influenza, as well as many other infections.

1. Stay home until your fever is gone.

- Anyone who has a fever (100° F [37.8° C] or higher) plus a cough or sore throat should **STAY HOME** until the fever is gone for at least 24 hours without fever-reducing medicines such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen.
- Most people with flu-like symptoms get better on their own, without medical treatment. **They do not need to go to the hospital or their doctor.**
- Rest and drink plenty of fluids. Over-the-counter medications such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen can reduce fever and help relieve muscle aches.
- Children 18 and younger should **NOT** take aspirin or aspirin-containing medications because aspirin raises the risk of a serious illness called Reye syndrome in children with viral illnesses.

2. People who have certain underlying conditions are more likely than others to get very sick from influenza. Call a doctor right away for advice if the sick person has any of the conditions in Box A.**BOX A – Underlying Conditions Increasing Risk of Complications from Influenza**

- Pregnancy
- Women who have given birth or had a miscarriage or abortion in the past 2 weeks
- Age younger than 2 or older than 64 years
- Asthma or any other chronic respiratory disease
- Heart, kidney, or liver disease, except hypertension
- Hematologic diseases, such as sickle cell anemia
- Diabetes or other metabolic disorders
- Weakened immune system, from illness (such as HIV/AIDS or cancer) or medication
- Neuromuscular disorders that interfere with breathing or the discharge of mucus
- Long-term aspirin therapy in people under 19 years of age

- Early treatment with prescription antiviral medication may be recommended for people with these underlying conditions. Treatment with oseltamivir (Tamiflu®) or zanamivir (Relenza®) is most effective if started soon after symptoms first start (within 2 days, ideally).
- Household members with these underlying conditions but who are not sick may also need to take medicine to prevent influenza infection. They should also talk to a doctor, even if they don't have symptoms.

3. Avoid close contact with other people.

- The sick person should stay as far away from other people as possible.
- Sick people should not have visitors. If someone from outside the household member must enter the home, he or she should avoid contact with the sick person.
- Household members should limit contact with the sick person. Avoid kissing. Do not share toothbrushes, towels, eating utensils, or drinks.
- Choose one person to be the main caretaker if you can. The caretaker should preferably NOT have any underlying medical conditions (**see Box A**).
- If possible, have the sick person stay and sleep in a separate room, away from people who are well and the caretaker.
- The sick person should wear a surgical mask to help prevent the spread of infection when close contact can't be avoided. Buy surgical masks at pharmacies, medical supply stores, or hardware stores. Wash hands with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand cleaner after applying or removing a mask.
- If the sick person absolutely has to leave the home, he or she should avoid using public transportation (such as the subway or bus) and instead get a ride or use a taxi or car service.

4. Cover your cough and wash your hands!

- Influenza is easily spread when an infected person coughs or sneezes.
- Cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze. Use a tissue or the inside of your elbow – not your hand.
- Don't touch your nose, face, or eyes after you cough or sneeze.
- Wash hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Or use an alcohol-based hand cleaner.

5. Cleaning can help, too.

- Flu virus usually spreads when an infected person coughs or sneezes. But it is also possible to get the flu by touching a surface contaminated with the virus, such as a doorknob, then touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
- **Clean frequently touched surfaces:** Use a standard household disinfectant to clean doorknobs, phones, remote controls, video game controllers, bedside lamps and tables, children's toys, and other surfaces that many people touch. Wash your hands with soap and water after cleaning.
- **Dishes:** Wash dishes and eating utensils in a dishwasher or by hand with warm water and soap.
- **Laundry:** Avoid "hugging" the sick person's soiled laundry, so you don't come in contact with the virus. It is okay to wash the sick person's sheets, towels, and clothes with the rest of the household laundry. Use detergent and hot, warm, or cold water, as usual. Tumble dry sheets and towels on a hot setting.

6. Household members should self-monitor for symptoms.

- If other people in the home become ill, they should follow the steps described above (stay home until 24 hours of no fever without fever-reducing medicine, call a doctor if they have an underlying condition).
- Close contacts may consider using a facemask (eg, surgical mask) when in close contact with the sick person. Surgical masks can be purchased at a pharmacy, medical supply store, or hardware store. The person putting on or removing the mask should wash their hands or use an alcohol-based hand rub afterward.

7. Emergency! Go to the hospital right away or call 911 if you have:

- Any of the following **severe symptoms**:
- Be sure to let the hospital or the 911 operator know the patient may have the flu.

IN ADULTS

- Trouble breathing or shortness of breath
- Severe pain or pressure in the chest or stomach
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion or disorientation
- Vomiting that won't stop

IN CHILDREN

- Fast breathing or difficulty breathing
- Bluish skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Vomiting or diarrhea that won't stop
- Not waking up or not interacting
- Unusual irritability