

# *F a c t s*

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## WHAT YOU CAN DO FOR YOURSELF WHEN YOU HAVE INFLUENZA

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**REST** –Probably, you will feel very weak and tired until your temperature returns to normal (about 3 days), and resting will provide comfort and allow your body to use its energy to fight the infection. You should avoid contact with others while the infection is contagious (at least six days after the first symptom appears).

**DRINK PLENTY OF FLUIDS** – Extra fluids are needed to replace those lost because of fever (sweating). If your urine is dark, you need more to drink. Liquids, especially warm ones like chicken soup, help loosen mucus. Try to drink a glass of juice/water or an equal amount of some other fluid every hour while you are awake.

**TAKE ACETAMINOPHEN** –or ibuprophen as recommended on the package to bring down your fever and ease your muscle pain (unless your doctor says otherwise). *Children under 18 years of age should not take aspirin (ASA) or any products containing aspirin (ASA).* The combination of influenza and aspirin in this age group has been known to cause Reye’s syndrome, a very serious condition affecting the nervous system and liver. Antibiotics are not effective against influenza because it is a virus, and antibiotics fight bacteria. A hot water bottle or heating pad may also relieve muscle pain. A cup of Epsom salts in a warm bath may be soothing.

**GARGLE** –with a glass of warm water to ease a sore throat. Sugarless hard candy also helps, as do lozenges.

**USE SALINE NOSE DROPS OR SPRAY** (ones that contain salt water but no medicine) to help soothe or clear a stuffed nose. Try not to blow your nose as this could send infected secretions into your sinuses. Wipe your nose with disposable tissues and put them in the garbage can immediately. Cover your nose and mouth with tissues when you cough or sneeze and throw them in the garbage as well. Wash your hands often.

**DO NOT SMOKE** –it is very irritating to the damaged airways.

If you are a single parent, or you are responsible for the care of someone who is frail or disabled, you may need to call someone to help you until you are feeling better.

If you buy medicine at the drug store to treat your symptoms (“over-the-counter” medications), check with the pharmacist to see if it is the best one for you. Mention if you have a chronic illness or are taking any other medicine.

# — *Health & Environment Facts* —

## **CALL YOUR DOCTOR IF ...**

If you are a normally healthy person and have been suffering with the flu, it is time to call the doctor, EMS (emergency medical services) or health help line if:

- You become short of breath while resting or doing very little;
- Breathing is difficult or painful;
- You are coughing up bloody sputum;
- You are wheezing;
- You have had a fever for three or four days and you are not getting better-or you may be getting worse;
- You have started to feel better, and suddenly you get a high fever and start to feel sick again;
- It is noted by yourself and others that you are extremely drowsy and difficult to wake up or that you are disoriented or confused;
- You have extreme pain in your ear.

Seek medical care as soon as possible, in order to prevent your condition from worsening. Bacteria may have invaded your damaged tissues. At this point your doctor may consider giving you an antibiotic.

*Source: Canadian Pandemic Influenza Plan Feb. 2004, Annex G, pg. 251*

## APPENDIX F: WEBSITES

### USEFUL WEBSITES ON INFLUENZA

#### **Government of Canada**

<http://www.influenza.gc.ca>

- Includes Canadian Pandemic Influenza Plan
- Includes avian influenza
- Includes flu information
- Includes flu watch which summarizes influenza surveillance activities in Canada

#### **Ontario Ministry of Health and Long Term Care**

<http://www.health.gov.on.ca>

- Ontario Health Pandemic Influenza Plan

#### **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)**

<http://www.cdc.gov>

#### **World Health Organization**

<http://who.int>

#### **Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Canada**

<http://www.ocipep.gc.ca/index-en.asp>

- Includes how to prepare for emergencies