

Management of Influenza in the Home

April 30, 2009



Instructions for the sick person

- Stay home for 7 days after onset of symptoms in adults, and 10 days after onset of symptoms in children.
- Avoid contact with the rest of the family by using a separate bedroom and bathroom if possible. If the bathroom must be shared, ensure you have your own towel.
- If possible, wear a surgical mask if you must be in contact with family members.
- Cough into a tissue or your sleeve. Discard tissues immediately.
- Wash hands frequently using soap and water or an alcohol hand sanitizer.
- Don't share anything that goes in your mouth like utensils, drinking glasses and toothbrushes.
- Don't have visitors in the house.
- If you need to leave the house for a medical appointment, wear a surgical mask. These may be available at pharmacies, medical surgical supplies vendors or hardware stores. See below for when to seek medical care.
- Follow the advice of your health care provider. You can also call Telehealth Ontario for advice (1-866-797-0000). Avoid the use of aspirin and aspirin-containing products for children and teenagers.

Instructions for caregivers

- If possible, only one family member should care for a sick person. Pregnant women should avoid providing care to others.
- Have as little close contact as possible with the sick person. Stay at least 6 feet away from the sick person if possible.
- When holding a small child who is sick, place their chin on your shoulder so that they do not cough in your face.
- Wear a surgical mask if you must be in direct contact with a sick person. These may be available at medical surgical supplies vendors, pharmacies or hardware stores. Whenever you take the mask off, throw it out. Do not re-use masks.
- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer and after each time you care for the sick person and/or you remove your mask.
- Provide extra cleaning in frequently touched areas of the house (table tops, keyboards, doorknobs, counter tops, remote controls, telephones, light switches, etc). Dishwashing and laundry can be done as normal.

Instructions for all household contacts

- Limit activities in the community to only what is essential. If you must go to work or school, discuss this with the Public Health Nurse.
- Watch for symptoms that include fever, cough, sore throat, sore muscles, joint pain, fatigue, and sometimes diarrhea and vomiting.
- At the first sign of illness, stay at home and call your health care provider. You can also call Telehealth Ontario for advice 1-866-797-0000.

Seek Emergency Medical Care

If the sick person:

- has difficulty breathing or has chest pain
- has purple or blue discoloration of the lips
- is vomiting and is unable to keep liquids down
- has signs of dehydration such as dizziness when standing, absence of urination, or in infants, a lack of tears when they cry
- has a seizure
- is less responsive than normal or becomes confused

For additional information, please contact the Grey Bruce Health Unit at 519-376-9420.

Source: Middlesex London Health Unit, April 2009