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Here are some ideas and suggestions to keep in mind when caring for someone who is sick. Most people who get sick with the H1N1 flu virus can be cared for at home. People with risk conditions — such as pregnant women or those with chronic illnesses like asthma or diabetes— should not look after people who are sick, if possible.

If you are alone or a single parent or responsible for the care of someone who is elderly, frail or has a disability and you have the flu, call someone to help you until you are feeling better.

Step #1 Protect Yourself and Others

Clean your hands with either soap (liquid is preferred) and warm water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer:

- before eating or drinking;
- before and after food preparation;
- before and after touching your eyes, nose or mouth;
- before and after using shared items like computers and common surfaces like doorknobs and handles;
- after coughing or sneezing;
- after wiping your nose or even someone else's nose;
- after touching items that the sick person has touched (such as dishes, towels and clothes);
- after taking out garbage; and
- if you can see dirt on your hands, always wash with soap and water first.

There is no evidence that wearing a mask will protect you from getting the flu. However, if you choose to wear a mask, wash your hands before and after putting on or taking off the mask.

Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. They are safe for children to use under adult supervision.

When holding a sick child who is sick, place their chin on your shoulder so that they do not cough in your face.

Fragrances in some alcohol-based sanitizers may cause reactions in some people.

Teach children and others how and when to clean their hands.

Step #2 Allow the Sick Person to Rest (away from others)

Anyone sick with the H1N1 flu virus will need lots of rest and will be contagious for about seven days from the onset of the symptoms - especially in the first few days.

Don't have visitors in the home.

If possible, try keeping the sick person in a well ventilated room of their own and avoid contact with the rest of the family. Of course, keep a close eye on sick children.

Clean items (such as the phone, TV remote) and surfaces that the sick person has touched using normal household disinfectant. The virus can survive on hard surfaces for up to 48 hours.

The sick person can resume normal activities 24 hours after symptoms are resolved.

Plan for other child care arrangements in case your child becomes ill and will not be going to school or daycare.

Step #3 Treat the Symptoms

Fever often comes with chills or aches and pains. Certain medications (such as acetaminophen - for example Tylenol®, or ibuprofen - for example Advil®) may help to reduce these symptoms. Do not give acetylsalicylic acid or ASA - for example Aspirin®, to children or teenagers under age 16 to treat a fever. It has been linked to Reye's Syndrome, a potentially fatal disease associated with aspirin consumption by children with viral diseases.

To reduce muscle pain, apply heat carefully for short periods of time using a hot water bottle or heating pad.

For a stuffy nose, use saline drops
Also try gargling with warm water or suck on hard candy or lozenges

Step #4 Give Lots of Fluids and Nutritious Food and Ensure a Smoke-free Environment

Warm drinks, such as tea with honey and lemon or chicken soup, can be very soothing for a sore throat. The sick person may not have an appetite, but simple foods may be welcomed.

Cigarette smoking is hard on the lungs of a person with an infection. The sick person should avoid smoking. Second-hand smoke is harmful also, so people should not smoke around the sick person.

Avoid alcohol and caffeine.

Always keep some extra non-perishable foods, like juice, canned soup and fruits and vegetables, stored at home in case you are unable to get to a store.

Step #5 Keep the Sick Person's Things Separate

Each sick person should have his/her own personal items (towel, face cloth, toothbrush etc.) and they should be kept separate from the belongings of others in the house. Wash your hands after touching the items belonging to the sick person and avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.

Keep common surfaces (door knobs, light switches) clean and disinfected.

Step #6 Stay Alert for Complications

When treated at home with proper care, most people will begin to feel better after a few days. Take the sick person's temperature daily to track any fever. Sometimes people with underlying medical conditions - such as asthma or diabetes - may develop complications and so may need to see a health care provider.

Make sure you have a list of phone numbers for family, friends, neighbours, your health care provider and Telehealth available by your phone.

IMPORTANT

If any of the following complications occur, call a health care provider right away:

- Chest pain
- Shortness of breath
- Rapid or difficulty breathing, or wheezing
- Bluish or grey skin color
- Bloody or coloured mucus/spit
- Sudden dizziness or confusion

- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Seizures
- High fever lasting more than three days
- Low blood pressure
- Dehydration (people may be dizzy when they stand up, they are not urinating, ill infants may not have tears when they cry)
- Additional symptoms to watch for in children:
 - Not drinking enough fluids or eating
 - Not waking up or interacting
 - Irritability; not wanting to play or be held

People at Risk of Complications

The following groups are not more likely to get the H1N1 virus. However, they are more at risk of developing complications if they do get sick:

Children under five years of age (especially those less than two years old)

Women who are pregnant

People with chronic conditions such as:

- Heart disease
- Liver disease
- Kidney disease
- Blood disorders
- Diabetes
- Severe obesity
- Asthma and chronic lung disease
- Immunosuppressed (people taking cancer drugs or people with HIV AIDS)
- Neurological disorders

Early treatment can help to reduce the risk of complications, so it's important that you speak to a medical professional if you develop flu symptoms, and seek medical care if the symptoms worsen.

IMPORTANT If you have flu symptoms and you have one of these risk factors, contact a health care provider as soon as possible — you may need antiviral medications.