



Guidelines for Recognizing Influenza (Flu) Symptoms and Management

Signs and Symptoms of Influenza (Flu)

Infection with the influenza virus typically causes:

- fever (temperature $>100^{\circ}$ F)
- cough
- sore throat
- tiredness
- headache
- muscle aches

People infected with influenza may show typical symptoms such as those listed above, but some will develop more serious and sometimes life-threatening complications such as pneumonia. Certain groups (such as persons with diabetes, heart disease, asthma, or emphysema, and pregnant women) are more likely to develop severe illness or complications from flu.

Other Facts about Influenza Infection



The influenza virus is spread by the tiny droplets expelled through the nose and mouth when an infected person coughs or sneezes. These infection-carrying droplets can spread up to 6 feet from the infected individual.

Infection can result from breathing in these droplets or by touching a surface on which the droplets have landed (such as a doorknob or computer keyboard) and then touching the mouth, nose, or eyes. The flu virus can even live for up to 2 days on certain surfaces.

A person infected with influenza can infect others anytime from about 24 hours before they even begin to feel ill through about 7 days after the start of their symptoms (children may spread the virus even longer - up to 10 days after symptoms start).

How to Limit the Spread of Infection

- Stay healthy – get plenty of rest and fluids, eat a healthy diet, exercise regularly, and get vaccinated yearly against seasonal flu
- Wash your hands frequently or use alcohol-based hand sanitizing gel
- Clean hard surfaces such as doorknobs and telephones with disinfecting wipes
- Cover your nose and mouth with the inside of your elbow or a tissue when you cough or sneeze and encourage others to do the same
- Put used tissues immediately into the trash
- Stay home from work if you are ill, and keep your children home from school when they are sick
- Practice social distancing (for example, work from home, bank on the Internet, or avoid unnecessary travel)



- Be prepared in the event that you are asked to voluntarily remain at home – have an emergency supply kit for your home including water, food, and medications (both basic non-prescription medications like ibuprofen and prescription medications – at least a 2 week supply)

What to Do if You Are Ill

A fever with a cough or sore throat may indicate infection with influenza. Have a thermometer at home and know how to use it properly.

- Place the thermometer bulb under the tongue for at least two minutes
- Wait more than 10 minutes after eating or drinking before taking your temperature
- A temperature 100° F or higher indicates a fever

If you have a fever with a cough or sore throat, you should avoid contact with others and contact your doctor to let them know that you are concerned about influenza. Wearing a surgical-type mask may help to decrease the chance of spreading infection.

In general, healthy persons with seasonal flu may remain at home and care for themselves if their symptoms are not too severe or prolonged, as described in the next section.

Caring for a Person Infected with Influenza at Home

The ill person should:

- Avoid contact with healthy family members
- If possible, stay in a separate room with the door closed
- If possible, use a separate bathroom that is cleaned daily with household disinfectant
- Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue and dispose of the tissue in the trash
- Wear a surgical-type mask, if available
- Stay at home – do not go to work, school, the store, or anywhere else except the doctor's office
- Drink plenty of fluids and eat as healthy a diet as possible
- Get plenty of rest
- Take over-the-counter medications (e.g. to treat fever, congestion, cough) as needed to support you through the illness
- Children (18 years and under) should **NOT** take aspirin or aspirin-containing products (e.g. bismuth subsalicylate – Pepto Bismol) if influenza is suspected because of the risk of Reye syndrome, a rare but serious complication. Other medications such as acetaminophen (e.g. Tylenol) or ibuprofen (e.g. Advil or Motrin) may be used for relief of fever.

Other members of the household should:

- Discourage visitors
- If possible, have only one designated adult in the home care for sick persons.
- Avoid having pregnant women care for the sick person



- Try to avoid contact with the ill person, or attempt to stay 6 or more feet away if possible
- Wash hands with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand gel frequently, including after every contact with a sick person or the person's room or bathroom.
- Encourage the ill person to drink plenty of fluids, eat a nourishing diet and get plenty of rest.
- Avoid contact with the ill person's dishes, utensils, towels, or toothbrush
- Wash the ill person's sheets and clothing with detergent and tumble dry on high heat
- Wash any other items touched by the ill person with soap and water or clean with disinfectant wipes
- Closely monitor the ill person for signs of worsening illness which would require specialized health care. Such signs may include:
 - Shortness of breath or increasing difficulty breathing; chest pain
 - Purple or blue discoloration of the lips
 - Vomiting and unable to keep liquids down
 - Dehydration
 - Prolonged or persistently high fever despite taking appropriate medications (e.g. acetaminophen [e.g. Tylenol] or ibuprofen [e.g. Advil or Motrin])
 - Mental confusion
 - Seizures
 - Lethargy (i.e., not alert or responding to normal stimuli)
- If the ill person shows signs of worsening or if uncertain, contact a medical provider and seek medical care immediately

For more information: www.hawaii.gov/health