

Management of Influenza in the Home

FACT SHEET



Updated: October 22, 2009

Instructions for the sick person

- 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 returning to work

- Stay home from work or school until the fever has been absent for 24 hours (without the use of fever reducing medications) and you are feeling well enough to resume normal activities. It is not unusual for individuals to experience a cough for days to weeks after a respiratory infection. The presence of cough in the absence of other symptoms is not sufficient to stay away from work or school.
- If you are a healthcare worker, you should remain off work until 24 hours after all symptoms (other than a mild cough) have resolved, typically a period of 5 to 8 days. However, healthcare workers who have been treated with oseltamivir (Tamiflu®) for 72 hours will not be as infectious and may return to work if you feel generally well except for a mild cough.
- Healthcare workers should consult with Occupational Health for a return to work assessment.

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, door knobs, 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 your Health Care Provider or 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; and is less responsive than normal or becomes confused.

For additional information,

please contact the Peterborough County-City Health Unit at 705-743-1000.