

Caring for Seasonal and Novel H1N1 Influenza at Home



The symptoms of Novel H1N1 flu virus in people are similar to the symptoms of seasonal flu and include **fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue.** A significant number of people who have been infected with novel H1N1 flu virus also have reported **diarrhea and vomiting.**

How to Care for the Flu at Home

Most people with influenza recover without medication. The following information can help you provide safer care at home for sick persons during a flu outbreak or flu pandemic.

Get plenty of rest.	Drink clear fluids to keep from being dehydrated.	Check with your health care provider about any special care that you might need if you are pregnant or have a health condition such as diabetes, heart disease asthma, or emphysema. Your doctor may want to prescribe antiviral medications for you.	Be watchful for warning signs that might indicate that you need to seek medical attention.*
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* **Warning signs include:** *Adults* - Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath, Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen, Sudden dizziness, Confusion, Severe or persistent vomiting, Flu-like symptoms that improve but then return with fever and worse cough. *Children* - Fast breathing or trouble breathing, Bluish or gray skin color, Not drinking enough fluids, Severe or persistent vomiting, Not waking up or not interacting, Irritability and not wanting to be held, Flu-like symptoms that improve but then return with fever and worse cough.

How to Lessen the Spread of the Flu at Home

The main way that influenza viruses spread is from person to person in respiratory droplets of coughs or sneezes. To lessen the spread of influenza, you should:

Cover coughs and sneezes.	Avoid close contact with others while you are sick. Individuals can be infectious for 7 days from onset of illness, but are most infectious until 24 hours after fever has passed, usually 3 to 5 days.	Wash your hands often with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub, especially after using tissues and after coughing or sneezing into hands. Have everyone in the household wash their hands often.	Anyone who is a high risk group for complications from influenza** should avoid close contact (within 6 feet) with household members who are sick. Infants should not be cared for by sick family members.
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** These include Pregnant women, people 65 and older, people with weakened immune systems, chronic medical conditions and young children.