

PANDEMIC FLU

FAMILY GUIDE TO HOME CARE

Flu is very contagious. It can be caught from inhaling droplets in the air from someone sneezing, coughing or talking.

Doctors' offices and hospital emergency rooms may become full of sick patients early in a flu pandemic. Treatment options may be available such as "fever clinics" or "influenza hospitals" where people with flu-like illness can be examined and treated without exposing others. Many people, however, will need to be cared for at home.

FLU SYMPTOMS

Sudden fever (100.4° F or more) • Headache • Tiredness, sometimes extreme • Dry cough • Sore throat • Nasal congestion • Body aches

SEEKING HELP

If you or a family member develops flu symptoms, call your doctor right away. Have the following information available before you call:

- Symptoms (write them down)
- Other symptoms not specific to flu
- Any difficulty breathing
- Amount of food and fluid intake
- Sleep pattern changes

For children who are ill, have the following information for the doctor:

- Temperature
- Mood changes including crying more than usual, being tired or listless, appearing to be irritable or excited
- Sleep pattern changes
- All solids and liquids the child has had

- Urination including amount or frequency
- Any medications taken

The staff will ask questions and then tell you what you need to do.

- You may be asked to come to the doctor's office, flu clinic or hospital. When you arrive, tell the staff right away that you or family members have flu symptoms.
- You may be asked to wear a mask or sit in a separate area.
- You may be told to stay at home.

Generally people begin to feel better after the body's temperature returns to normal in about three days and are ready to return to normal activities in about a week. It is common for tiredness and a cough to linger for several weeks.

EMERGENCY WARNING SIGNS

Some emergency warning signs require urgent medical attention. Seek medical care immediately if you or family members have any of these signs:

- Difficult or painful breathing
- Shortness of breath at rest
- Wheezing
- Coughing up bloody sputum
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Fever for 3 to 4 days without improvement, or improvement then sudden high fever and return of symptoms
- Sudden dizziness
- Extreme drowsiness or difficulty waking
- Confusion or disorientation
- Severe earache
- Severe or persistent vomiting

COMPLICATIONS IN CHILDREN

The most common symptoms of flu in children are fever and sudden onset of cough. Infants less than 2 months old can become ill and

progress to severe illness rapidly. Seek medical care immediately if your child is experiencing any of these signs:

- Has fast breathing, trouble breathing or change in breathing patterns
- Has a bluish skin color
- Drinks so little fluid that he or she is not urinating at least every six hour when awake
- Is hard to wake up or is unresponsive
- Is constantly irritable, will not be held, will not calm down
- Has a loss of interest in most things, listlessness
- Has flu-like symptoms that improve, then return with fever and worse cough
- Has a fever with a rash
- Does not “seem right”

Take your child to the emergency room or call 9-1-1 immediately if your child:

- Has severe trouble breathing not caused by a stuffy nose
- Has blue lips or hands, sudden pallor, or has cold legs up to the knees
- Is limp or unable to move
- Is hard to wake up, unusually quiet or unresponsive
- Shows signs of pain – headache and/or stiff neck, especially with a fever, listlessness and sensitivity to light
- Has a seizure

HOME CARE SUPPLIES

- Adult and child thermometers
- Plenty of fluids such as water, fruit juice and infant electrolyte replacement drink such as Pedialyte®
- Simple foods such as broth, soup, rice, macaroni and cheese and gelatin
- Prescription and over-the-counter medications

CARE FOR THOSE WHO ARE SICK

- Rest. You probably will feel weak and tired until your temperature returns to normal in about three days. Try to avoid contact with others while the infection is contagious – at least six days after the first symptom appears.
- Drink plenty of fluids. You will need to replace lost fluids because of fever (sweating). Liquids, especially warm ones like chicken soup, help loosen mucus.
- Don't drink alcohol.
- Stop smoking and avoid secondhand smoke.
- A hot water bottle or heating pad may relieve muscle pain. A cup of Epsom salts in a warm bath may be soothing.
- Gargle with warm salt water to ease a sore throat. Throat sprays or lozenges may help relieve pain.
- For stuffy nose, use saline nose drops or spray that contain saltwater but no medicine. Breathe moist air from a hot shower or sink filled with hot water.
- Wipe your nose with disposable tissues and put them in the garbage immediately. Cover your nose and mouth with tissues when coughing or sneezing and throw them in the garbage as well. Wash your hands often.
- If the skin around your nose and lips becomes sore from repeated rubbing with tissues, apply petroleum jelly to the area. Disposable tissues containing lotion may help.
- Elevating your head at night with an extra pillow may ease coughing.
- If you are a single parent, or you are responsible for the care of someone who is frail or disabled, you may need to call someone to help until you are feeling better.

CARE FOR CHILDREN WHO ARE SICK

- Dress a child in lightweight clothing.
- Keep room temperature at 68° F.
- Offer fluids or breastfeed frequently while child is awake.
- Elevate head of the bed.

- Avoid cool baths or alcohol rubs.
- Use a humidifier (except with asthmatic children). Clean daily with hot water mixture of one part bleach to nine parts water to prevent bacteria and mold growth.

PRESCRIPTION MEDICATIONS

- If available, doctors may prescribe an antiviral medication that may reduce the length and severity of illness. Antivirals also may prevent complications such as pneumonia. **ANTIVIRALS MUST BE STARTED WITHIN 48 HOURS OF FIRST SIGN OF SYMPTOMS** to have any affect on the illness.
- **ANTIBIOTICS ARE NOT EFFECTIVE AGAINST INFLUENZA** because flu is caused by a virus, and antibiotics fight bacteria. If you develop a secondary bacterial infection, a doctor may prescribe antibiotics, but the drugs are not for flu.
- Take any medication **EXACTLY** as prescribed. Follow all instructions **CAREFULLY**. If an allergic reaction occurs, consult a health care professional immediately.

OVER-THE-COUNTER MEDICATIONS

- Medications advertised to treat flu only relieve flu symptoms. Most contain a combination of medications including an antihistamine to stop a runny nose and sneezing, a decongestant, cough suppressant, expectorant to bring up mucus, fever reducer and pain reliever. Read the label to be sure that the ingredients treat the symptoms you have, and note any possible side effects or interactions with other drugs or health conditions.
- Take acetaminophen (such as Tylenol®) or ibuprofen (such as Advil® or Motrin®) as recommended on the package to control fever and ease muscle pain unless your doctor says otherwise.
- **CHILDREN YOUNGER THAN 18 SHOULD NOT TAKE ASPIRIN OR ANY PRODUCTS CONTAINING ASPIRIN.**

TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

You will not be able to care for others if you do not also care for yourself physically and emotionally:

- Get plenty of rest
- Drink lots of liquids

- Get some exercise
- Maintain a healthy diet
- Do not smoke
- Wash your hands often

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- **Texas Department of State Health Services** Web site:
www.dshs.state.tx.us
- **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**
Public Response Hotline
800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636) *(English and Spanish)*
888-232-6348 (TTY)
e-mail: inquiry@cdc.gov
- **Poison Control:** 800-222-1222
- **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention** Web site:
www.cdc.gov
- **U.S. Department of Health and Human Services** Web site:
www.pandemicflu.gov
- *LOCAL CONTACT INFORMATION HERE*