



University of New Mexico Hospitals / Epidemiology Department

## Taking Care of Others during an Influenza (Flu) Outbreak

May 6, 2009

- Provide plenty of fluids. Avoid alcohol and beverages with caffeine, as these will cause dehydration.
- Keep patient clean, dry, warm, and isolated from others in the house.
- Reassure patient that you will take care of him/her.
- Take the patient's temperature (morning and evening). Keep a record. Give fever-reducing medication such as acetaminophen (e.g., Tylenol) or ibuprofen (e.g., Advil, Motrin or other). Aspirin may be used but should be avoided by anyone under age 20.
- Consider giving/taking a lukewarm water sponge bath or tub bath to reduce fever.
- Encourage gargling with warm salt water or using throat lozenges to reduce throat pain.
- To ease sore throat pain, offer ice cream, sherbet, popsicles, or sorbets.
- Every 2-3 hours, help patient change position in bed. Take brief walks around the room to avoid chest congestion. Have patient take 4-5 slow, deep breaths and try to cough (cover cough!).
- For nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea, offer clear liquid diet and small sips of fluids with electrolytes. Give ice chips, liquids, and avoid acidic drinks such as citrus or cranberry juices.
- Call or seek medical help if patient has: confusion or extreme irritability; difficulty breathing or chest pain with each breath; cough producing frothy or red saliva; bluish skin; stiff neck; inability to move arm or leg or first-time seizure.
- Seek medical help if high or worrisome fever develops. Guidelines for fever are:
  - ❖ Infants under 3 months – a fever of 100.4°F or above if taken rectally
  - ❖ Children from 3 months to 2 years – a fever of 103°F or above
  - ❖ Children over 2 years to adults – a fever of 104°F or above.

Sources: Us. Department of Health and Human Services, "Now is the time to prepare. Your Guide to Pandemic Flu Care in the Home," Howard County General Hospital, Howard County Health Department and the Horizon Foundation, U.S. National Security Agency.

References: For additional information, please see: [www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov).

## Treatment is Available for Those Who Are Seriously Ill

It is expected that most people will recover without needing medical care.

### EMERGENCY WARNING SIGNS

Seek emergency medical care if you become ill and experience any of the following warning signs:

**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, being so irritable that the child does not want to be held, and flu-like symptoms improving, but then return with fever and worsening cough.

**Adults:** Difficulty in breathing or shortness of breath, pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen, sudden dizziness, confusion, severe or persistent vomiting, flu-like symptoms improving, but then returning with fever and worsening cough.

### Important information for people with heart disease, stroke, and cardiovascular disease:

- Maintain a two-week supply of your medications.
- Do not stop your medications without consulting your healthcare provider, especially in the event of influenza or a respiratory infection.
- People with heart failure should be alert to changes in their breathing and should promptly report changes to their healthcare provider.
- It is important to wash your hands often with soap and water and to follow other basic hygiene to avoid infection.

## STAY HEALTHY

- Get your seasonal flu shot. NOTE: A seasonal flu shot will not protect you from a new virus strain, but may keep you healthier.
- Eat a balanced diet, exercise in moderation and get plenty of rest.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand rub.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.
- Put used tissues in a waste basket; not in a pocket or a purse.
- Use a surgical mask if you are instructed to do so.
- Practice 'social distancing' by limiting the amount of face-to-face contact with other people.

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For more information, contact:  
NM DOH Influenza Information

- Public: 866-850-5892
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