

# AT HOME CARE

In the event of a large scale disease outbreak, bioterrorist attack, influenza pandemic or other public health emergency, your health care provider may request that you care for yourself or sick family members at home, rather than visiting your health care provider's office, urgent care or emergency room.

## **How should I protect my family when caring for a sick person at home?**

The best way to prevent influenza from spreading from one person to another is to keep the sick person away from others as much as possible. Place a sick person in a room to themselves. Try to have just one person provide care. The caregiver should wash their hands before entering the room and immediately after leaving the room.

Sick family members should also remember to:

- Avoid sharing personal items like drinks, dishes, silverware and toothbrushes.
- Use respiratory etiquette such as covering their cough and sneezing into a tissue.
- Discard used tissues and wash their hands with soap and water after coughing or sneezing.

## **Should I do any extra cleaning?**

Common surfaces and shared items should be cleaned frequently with a household disinfectant according to the instructions on the product label. No special cleaning is necessary. Laundry, dishes and silverware used by the sick person do not need to be washed separately. Laundry should be washed with household laundry soap and tumbled dry on a hot setting. Dishes and silverware should be washed thoroughly in a dishwasher or by hand with soap and hot water before being re-used. The person handling dirty laundry, dishes or utensils should wash their hands immediately afterwards.

## **What kind of medical care should I provide for the sick person?**

Keep your health care provider informed. Ensure the sick person gets plenty of rest, eats small, healthy meals and drinks clear fluids such as water and electrolyte beverages.

Monitor their symptoms, including any fever. A fever may be uncomfortable, but it is not necessarily a bad thing. It is usually a sign that something is going on in your body. Fevers play an important role in helping your body fight off infections.

For adults a fever usually isn't dangerous unless it measures 103°F or higher. For very young children and infants, though, even a slight temperature may be a warning sign of serious illness or infection. Newborns may even develop a subnormal temperature when ill. Contact your health care provider if a fever goes beyond—

- 102°F for adults
- 102°F for infants and children older than 3 months
- 100.4°F for infants up to 3 months old (rectal temperature)

Check with your health care provider for a recommendation on using antiviral medication or comfort medications. **DO NOT** give aspirin to children or teenagers! It can cause a rare, but serious illness called Reye's syndrome.

## **What should I do if things get worse?**

Contact 9-1-1 immediately if the person—

- has coughing that produces thick mucus,
- has skin or lips turn blue,
- has difficulty breathing or chest pain,
- has signs of dehydration (such as dizziness when standing, not urinating, no tears when an infant cries),
- is vomiting and unable to keep liquids down,
- has an existing medical condition that worsens,
- becomes unusually irritable or confused,
- develops a stiff neck,
- becomes unable to move arms or legs, or
- has a seizure.

For more information, contact your local public health department or visit [www.FightTheFluMO.com](http://www.FightTheFluMO.com)

**FIGHT**  
**THE FLU**