



FIRST RESPONDERS

TIPS FOR PREVENTING THE SPREAD OF DISEASE

Influenza viruses like H1N1 and others are easily spread from person to person, usually on respiratory droplets when a person sneezes or coughs. They can also be spread on contaminated objects, surfaces or hands.

To protect yourself against influenza viruses:

- Get a seasonal flu vaccine.
- Keep a distance of at least six feet from people who are ill.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth after touching a person, surface or object.
- Wash your hands frequently, especially after touching common items, shared surfaces or another person.
- Carry alcohol-based hand sanitizer for times when soap and water are not available.
- Choose a healthy lifestyle that will enhance your body's immune system. This includes eating nutritious foods, getting adequate sleep, staying physically active and reducing stress and stopping harmful behaviors like smoking or tobacco use.

When your job requires you to be within six feet of someone who is ill, follow additional steps to protect yourself.

- Try to avoid face-to-face contact.
- Keep your interaction as short as possible.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth until you have used an alcohol-based hand sanitizer or washed your hands with soap and water.
- Ask the person to wear a mask, cover their cough and sneeze and wash their hands.

There are important differences between facemasks and respirators. Facemasks do not seal tightly to the face and are used to block large droplets from coming into contact with the wearer's mouth or nose. Most respirators, like N95s, are designed to seal tightly to the wearer's face and filter out very small particles that can be breathed in by the user.

There is limited information about the effectiveness of respirators and facemasks in preventing transmission of flu viruses. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) does not generally recommend that first responders wear facemasks or respirators to protect against influenza. However, their use could be considered under certain circumstances. Contact your local public health department for situation-specific guidance.