



LIVING IN CLOSE QUARTERS

CARING FOR SICK PEOPLE

Where should the sick person be placed?

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. Ideally, a sick person should stay in a private room and use a private bathroom. That is not always feasible when living in close quarters.

If private space is not available, rooms that are shared should be kept well ventilated. Pregnant women or people with chronic health conditions should be temporarily relocated so as not to share a room with the sick person. If that is not feasible, they should limit their face-to-face interaction with the person by keeping a distance of at least six feet. They may also want to consider asking their health care provider for a recommendation about whether to take antiviral medications. They should not provide care for the sick person.

What actions should those living in close quarters take to limit the spread of influenza?

The sick person should be encouraged to wear a face mask as long as one is available and tolerable. He should be instructed not to share personal items, to cover his coughs and sneezes and to wash his hands frequently with soap and water.

Other members of the household or facility should be encouraged to limit their interaction with the sick person and should be urged to wash their hands frequently with soap and water. Paper towels should be used for drying hands and disposed of immediately.

Is extra cleaning necessary?

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.

How should the sick person be cared for?

Ensure the sick person gets plenty of rest, eats small, healthy meals and drinks clear fluids such as water and electrolyte beverages. Monitor his symptoms, including any fever.

Is a fever dangerous?

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 a 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 a 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 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.