

Steps to Lessen the Spread of Flu in the Home

When providing care to a household member who is sick with influenza, the most important ways to protect yourself and others who are not sick are to:

- keep the sick person away from other people as much as possible, especially others who are at high risk for complications from influenza
- remind the sick person to cover their coughs, and clean their hands with soap and water often. If soap and water are not available, they should use an alcohol-based hand rub, especially after coughing and/or sneezing
- have everyone in the household clean their hands often, using soap and water (or an alcohol-based hand rub, if soap and water are not available). Children may need reminders or help keeping their hands clean
- If you are in a high risk group for complications from influenza, you should attempt to avoid close contact (within 6 feet) with household members who are sick with influenza. If close contact with a sick individual is unavoidable, consider wearing a facemask, if available and tolerable. Infants should not be cared for by sick family members.



Placement of the sick person

- Keep the sick person in a room separate from the common areas of the house. (For example, a spare bedroom with its own bathroom, if that's possible.) Keep the sickroom door closed.
- Unless necessary for medical care or other necessities, people who are sick with an influenza-like-illness should stay home and keep away from others, including avoiding travel, for at least 24 hours after fever is gone except to get medical care or for other necessities. (Fever should be gone without the use of a fever-reducing medicine).
- If persons with the flu need to leave the home (for example, for medical care), they should wear a facemask, if available and tolerable, and cover their nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing.
- Have the sick person wear a facemask – if available and tolerable – if they need to be in a common area of the house near other persons.
- If possible, sick persons should use a separate bathroom. This bathroom should be cleaned daily with household disinfectant (see below).

Protect other persons in the home

- The sick person should not have visitors other than caregivers. A phone call is safer than a visit.
- If possible, have only one adult in the home take care of the sick person. People at increased risk of severe illness from flu should not be the designated caretaker, if possible.
- If you are in a high risk group for complications from influenza, you should attempt to avoid close contact (within 6 feet) with household members who are sick with influenza. If close contact with a sick individual is unavoidable, consider wearing a facemask, if available and tolerable.

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- Avoid having pregnant women care for the sick person. (Pregnant women are at increased risk of influenza-related complications and immunity can be suppressed during pregnancy).
- Avoid having sick family members care for infants and other groups at high risk for complications of influenza.
- All persons in the household should clean their hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub frequently.
- Use paper towels for drying hands after hand washing or dedicate cloth towels to each person in the household. For example, have different colored towels for each person.
- If possible, consideration should be given to maintaining good ventilation in shared household areas (e.g., keeping windows open in restrooms, kitchen, bathroom, etc.).
- Antiviral medications can be used to prevent the flu, so check with your health care provider to see if some persons in the home should use antiviral medications.

If you are the caregiver

- Avoid being face-to-face with the sick person.
- When holding small children who are sick, place their chin on your shoulder so that they will not cough in your face.
- Clean your hands with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand rub after you touch the sick person or handle used tissues, or laundry.
- Talk to your health care provider about taking antiviral medication to prevent the caregiver from getting the flu.
- If you are at high risk of influenza associated complications, you should not be the designated caretaker, if possible.
- **Monitor yourself and household members for flu symptoms and contact a telephone hotline or health care provider if symptoms occur.**

Household Cleaning, Laundry, and Waste Disposal

- Throw away tissues and other disposable items used by the sick person in the trash. Wash your hands after touching used tissues and similar waste.
- Keep surfaces (especially bedside tables, surfaces in the bathroom, and toys for children) clean by wiping them down with a household disinfectant according to directions on the product label.
- Linens, eating utensils, and dishes belonging to those who are sick do not need to be cleaned separately, but importantly these items should not be shared without washing thoroughly first.
- Wash linens (such as bed sheets and towels) by using household laundry soap and tumble dry on a hot setting. Avoid “hugging” laundry prior to washing it to prevent contaminating yourself. Clean your hands with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand rub right after handling dirty laundry.
- Eating utensils should be washed either in a dishwasher or by hand with water and soap.



Source: www.cdc.gov