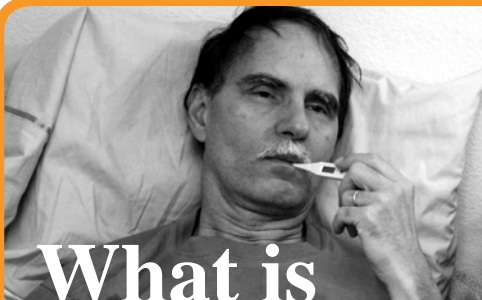


Influenza (the flu)

what can you do?

Note: The word flu is used instead of influenza.



What is H1N1 influenza virus?

- ✓ H1N1 influenza virus is a new type of flu virus. It is easily passed from person to person.
- ✓ People get sick because they do not have protection against the virus. There is no flu shot yet for this virus.
- ✓ Most people don't get really sick when they get this virus.

How will I feel? (symptoms)

a fever



The fever is often 38°C (100.4°F) or higher. It starts suddenly.

a dry cough



The cough can last for a few weeks.

an aching body



People have headaches and pains in their legs and lower back.

very weak and tired



People feel too weak to do anything. They don't want to get out of bed.

Other symptoms

Sometimes adults have other symptoms too.



For example:

- the chills (you feel cold)
- a sore throat
- a runny nose
- no appetite (you don't feel like eating)
- nausea (you feel like you will vomit)
- vomiting (throwing up)
- diarrhea

Note: A baby might cry more than usual.

How do I get the flu?

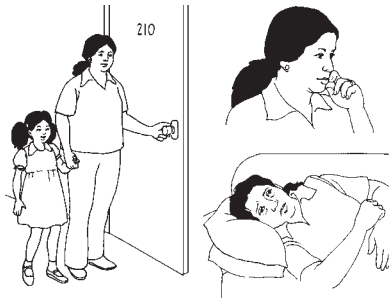
The flu is passed from person to person in different ways. For example:

- 1 George has the flu. The flu virus goes into the air when he coughs, sneezes or talks. If people are nearby, the virus can enter their eyes, nose and mouth.



- 2 George coughs into his hand. Then he touches a door handle. Now the flu virus is on the door handle.

- 3 Later, Geetha touches the door handle. The virus gets on her hand. The virus gets into her body when she touches her nose. A few days later, Geetha gets sick with the flu.



- 4 Geetha passes the flu virus to her daughter Sonia. Soon Sonia gets the flu. She can spread the virus to her classmates if she goes to school with the flu.



What to do to protect yourself and others

1 Get a flu shot

- ✓ A yearly flu shot helps protect people against the flu.
- ✓ It takes about 2 weeks for the flu shot to protect you.
- ✓ The flu shot does not give people the flu.
- ✓ The flu shot does not protect people from colds.

Note: There is no H1N1 flu shot yet, but one may be ready in the fall.

2 Clean your hands

The flu virus can live on your hands for 5 minutes. It can live on door handles for 1 to 2 days! Help protect yourself and other people by cleaning your hands often. Teach young children to clean their hands too.

When to clean your hands

- ✓ before you eat or serve food
- ✓ before you brush your teeth
- ✓ after you are near a person with the flu
- ✓ after you cough, sneeze or blow your nose

What to use

- ✓ Use regular hand soap and water.

OR

- ✓ Use hand cleanser or sanitizer that has alcohol in it.



How to wash your hands



1 Wet your hands with warm, running water.



2 Rub on regular soap. Lather well.



3 Rub your hands together for about 15 seconds. Rub all parts of your hands and wrists.



4 Rinse well under warm, running water.



5 Dry your hands with a clean towel.

3 Cover your cough

- ✓ Cover your coughs and sneezes with your arm, not your hand.
- ✓ If you use a tissue, throw it in the garbage. Clean your hands afterwards.



4 Stay home

- ✓ Stay home and rest if you are sick and don't get close to other people. Stay away from crowds.

5 Call your doctor

- ✓ Call your doctor if you have a new cough and fever. Tell them if you have been to a place that has the virus or if you have been in close contact with someone who has been sick with the virus.

The flu can be serious



The flu can be dangerous for some people, especially those under 2 years old, seniors and people who have health problems. People die from the flu every year.


What to do if you get the flu

How to take care of yourself

- ✓ Rest and get lots of sleep.



- ✓ Try to stay away from other people for 7 days after you get your first symptom.

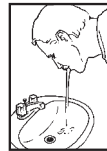
- ✓  Drink extra water, tea and juice. Chicken soup can help too.

- ✓ Use a humidifier. It puts water in the air. Clean the humidifier every day.



- ✓ Gargle with warm salt water if you have a sore throat. Mix 1/2 tsp. (2 mL) salt with 1 cup (250 mL) warm water.

Take a sip. Gargle for 10 seconds. Then spit out the water. Repeat 4 or 5 times per day.



- ✓ For a stuffy nose, use salt-water nose drops or mist. For example: Salinex®.



- ✓ You can also make nose drops. Mix 1/2 tsp. (2 mL) salt with 1 cup (250 mL) boiled water. Cool. Keep in a clean container. Use drops about 3 times per day.



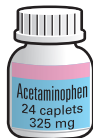
Note: Nasal means nose.

Over-the-counter medicine for adults

Over-the-counter medicine can help you feel better if you have the flu. You don't need a prescription. Try to use medicine that treats only one symptom at a time. For example:

For fever and body aches

- ✓ Use acetaminophen. Look for Tylenol® or another brand.



OR

- ✓ Use ibuprofen. Look for Advil®, Motrin® or another brand.



For a dry cough

- ✓ Sometimes a cough can keep you awake at night. Try cough syrup with dextromethorphan (DM).



For a sore throat

- ✓ Use throat lozenges. They help numb the throat. Look for lozenges with dyclonine.



For example: Sucrets®.

CAUTION:

- ✓ Follow the instructions for medicine carefully.
- ✓ If you are on any medication or have questions, talk to a pharmacist or call Health Link Alberta. Tell them all the medicine you are taking.

For example:

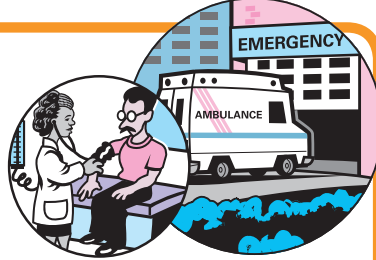
- over-the-counter medicine
- prescriptions
- traditional medicine (herbs)

Ask about side effects. For example, a medicine might irritate your stomach.

- ✓ Keep all medicine away from children.



When to get medical help

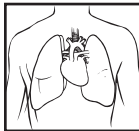


- ✓ If your symptoms are getting worse or you are not recovering, call Health Link Alberta for medical advice or your doctor for an appointment. If your symptoms become severe, go to an emergency centre right away.

For example:

- problems breathing
- pain in your chest
- a high fever that does not get better after 3 or 4 days

- ✓ Some people should always see their doctor if they get the flu.



For example: a person with heart or lung disease.

- ✓ If you do not know what to do, talk to a nurse at Health Link Alberta.

Health Link Alberta

If your symptoms are getting worse or you are not recovering, call Health Link for medical advice.

My baby has a high fever.



Health Link Alberta is a free service. You can phone 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. You can get health information and advice.

Help in other languages

Health Link Alberta has interpreters. They speak different languages. An interpreter can be on the phone with you and the nurse.

Call Health Link Alberta. Say: "I speak _____. I need an interpreter."

Call Health Link Alberta

In Calgary 403-943-5465
In Edmonton 780-408-5465
Outside Edmonton and Calgary, 1-866-408-5465 (free)

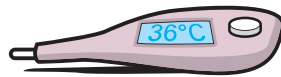
- Sometimes you have to wait a few minutes to talk to a nurse. Sometimes you have to leave a message, and the nurse calls you back.
- Your call is confidential. This means the nurse will not tell anyone what you say.

IMPORTANT NOTE:

Health Link Alberta does not replace your family doctor.

Call 9-1-1 if you have a medical emergency. Or go to the nearest emergency centre.

Children and the flu



What to do for a child's fever

- ✓ First, take your child's temperature. If your child has a fever, use acetaminophen. For example: Tylenol® for babies (infants) and children.



- ✓ Put lightweight clothing on your child. Keep the child's room at about 20°C.

- ✓ Give water or juice to your child often. Breastfeed babies often.

When to see a doctor

- ✓ Go to an emergency centre if your child's symptoms get worse. For example:
 - Your child has trouble breathing (not a stuffy nose).
 - You can't wake up your child.



WARNING: Health Canada recommends that over-the-counter cough and cold medications should not be used in children younger than six years of age.

CAUTION: Never give acetylsalicylic acid (ASA or Aspirin®) to children or teenagers who might have the flu or who have a fever.

Adapted from *Influenza (the flu) – What can you do?*, a special issue of *English Express*.

Government of Alberta

