

H1N1 (Swine) Flu: Caring for Someone Who is Ill

The world has seen the rise of a new flu virus called the H1N1 (swine) flu. That means it's possible you may need to care for someone infected with this flu. Knowing what to do is important not just to help that person get better but to keep yourself and others well, too.

Swine flu can cause symptoms that include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills, fatigue and sometimes vomiting and diarrhea. Call your doctor right away if you or someone you are caring for has flu symptoms (even mild ones) and has been exposed to someone with swine flu or has traveled to areas where there are documented cases of swine flu. Treatment includes pain relievers, antivirals, rest, fluids and isolation.

If you are a caregiver, follow this advice:

- **No visitors.** Other than the caregiver, the sick person should not have visitors, no matter how well-meaning they are.
- **Limit contact** with the sick person to one adult caretaker. Keep the sick person away from other household members as much as you can. Take special care to keep pregnant women, small children, the elderly and those with chronic health conditions away from the ill person. If possible, let the sick person have a separate bedroom and bathroom.
- **Avoid being face-to-face.** Hold sick kids with their chin on your shoulder so that they won't cough in your face.
- **Enforce handwashing.** Everyone in your household should wash their hands often with soap and water. If you don't have soap and water, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. Wash your hands after you touch the sick person or handle used tissues or laundry.
- **Don't share.** Avoid sharing towels, utensils or linens. Use disposable paper towels to dry hands after washing, if possible. Throw the paper towel in the trash after one use. If paper towel use is not an option, each person in the house should have a separate towel for their use only. Use a separate color or label for each person.
- **Disinfect daily.** Keep surfaces clean using a household disinfectant.
- **Wear a mask.** People who are an increased risk for severe illness from the flu should wear a facemask or respirator if they must take care of a person who has a flu-like illness. Ask your doctor which one is best for you to use. Healthcare workers should use a respirator in this situation. The person who is sick should also wear a mask if he or she will be in contact with anyone else.
- **Ask your doctor about antiviral drugs.** If you are caring for or are in the same household as a person with swine flu, ask your doctor if you should take antiviral medications. These medications can help keep you from getting ill.
- **Watch for flu symptoms** in yourself and other household members. Call the doctor right away if you or someone else in the house feels sick.