

Home Care for Pandemic Flu

When many people get a disease at the same time, it is called a pandemic. Pandemic flu is caused when many people get sick or infected from a new flu virus. Flu virus is spread through coughing and sneezing by people who have the flu. The flu also spreads when a person touches a surface or an object with the flu virus on it and then touches their eyes, nose or mouth. Flu virus can live for up to 24 hours on a solid surface.

The signs of seasonal flu are fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, muscle aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people have vomiting and diarrhea. The signs of pandemic flu are the same, but they may be more severe and affect more people. If you or a loved one has signs of pandemic flu, stay home and avoid contact with others.

If you are caring for a loved one during a pandemic, take steps to protect yourself and others. Listen for information from local and state officials on how to care for a person ill with the flu.

Gather these supplies to prepare for pandemic flu:

- Thermometer
- Disposable respirators (one for each person)
- Soap
- Alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- Paper towels
- Tissues
- A disinfectant cleaner or a cleaner with bleach
- A box of disposable gloves
- Cans of soup and broth
- Fluids with electrolytes and vitamins such as sports drinks like Gatorade, Powerade or Pedialyte (for children)
- Fever-reducing medicine such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen



Image: OSHA,
U.S. Dept. of Labor

Note:

- **Do not give aspirin or aspirin-based products to children.** It may cause a rare, but serious illness called Reye's syndrome.
- Check with a doctor **before** giving cold medicines for flu signs to children 4 years old or younger.

Caring for a Loved One

- **Call your doctor to report your loved one's flu signs.** Your doctor will give you advice about home care or tell you if emergency care is needed.
- Write down the date, time, fever, signs, medicines given and dosage. Make a note when his or her flu signs change.

- Give plenty of fluids to prevent dehydration, which can be serious. Make sure the ill person drinks plenty of fluids, ice and foods such as soup and broth at the first signs of the flu. If your loved one has diarrhea or vomiting, give fluids that contain electrolytes and vitamins. If fluids make nausea worse, give one sip at a time until his or her nausea improves.
- Medicines to ease the signs of the flu, such as antiviral medicines, may be ordered by your doctor.
- To help reduce a fever give:
 - Plenty of fluids.
 - A fever-reducing medicine, such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen. Do not give aspirin to anyone younger than 18 years old.
 - A sponge bath with lukewarm water for fever.
- Be sure all family members get enough rest.
- Avoid alcohol and tobacco products to stay healthy.

Call your doctor again if your loved one has:

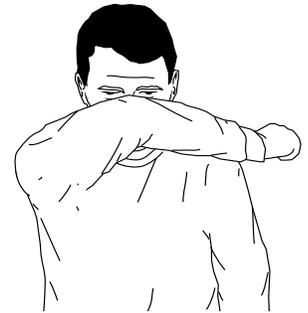
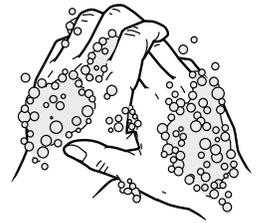
- A fever over 104 degrees Fahrenheit (F) or 40 degrees Celsius (C) for adults or children over 2 years old.
- A fever over 102 degrees F or 38.9 degrees C for babies 3 to 24 months old.
- A fever of 100.4 degrees F or 38 degrees C for babies less than 3 months old.
- A fever of 100.4 degrees F or 38 degrees C for three days for children 6 months or older.
- Children of any age who have a seizure with fever. Seizures happen when a child between 6 months and 6 years of age have a temperature greater than 100.4 degrees F or 38 degrees C.
- A cough that produces thick mucus.
- Signs of dehydration such as dry mouth or great thirst.
- Flu signs that get better and then get worse.
- Worsening of other medical conditions such as heart disease or diabetes.

Call 911 or go to the emergency department if your loved one has:

- Confusion or dizziness
- Problems with breathing
- Chest pain
- Blue or gray skin color
- A stiff neck
- No ability to move an arm or leg
- Seizures

To prevent the spread of the flu virus to others:

- Have the infected person and caregiver wear a facemask.
- Wash your hands with soap and warm water before and after providing care or touching items that may have germs on them.
 - › Wash your hands briskly for 15 seconds.
 - › Clean under your nails.
 - › Use paper towels to dry your hands so you do not spread germs on shared towels.
 - › Use a paper towel to turn off the faucet.
 - › Apply alcohol-based hand sanitizer. Put enough liquid on your hands to moisten the front and back of your hands and fingers. Rub the liquid briskly like you are washing your hands. Be sure to moisten between your fingers. Rub your hands 15 to 30 seconds or until your hands are dry.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze to prevent spreading germs to those around you. Throw away the tissue and wash your hands. If you do not have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your shoulder or arm.
- Keep your hands away from your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Keep everyone's personal items separate.
- Avoid sharing items such as food or eating utensils, toys, computers, pens, papers, clothes, towels, sheets or blankets, unless they are disinfected.
- Clean surfaces such as countertops, sinks, faucets, doorknobs, telephones and light switches with a disinfectant cleaner or a cleaner with bleach. You can also mix your own water and bleach solution. Mix 10 parts water with one part bleach.
- Use detergent and very hot water to wash dishes or clothes. Dishes used by sick people can be safely washed with dishes used by others if detergent and very hot water are used. The same is true for washing laundry.
- Wear disposable gloves when cleaning up body fluids then wash your hands.



If at any time you have questions or concerns, contact your doctor or nurse.