

What You Can Do Caring for People at Home



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For more information, please visit:

www.mass.gov/dph/flu

What is the flu?

Seasonal flu ("the flu") is caused by a virus that infects your lungs, nose, and throat and makes you sick. Flu season starts in early winter, and continues through early spring every year. The flu comes on very quickly and makes you feel very sick. Most people will feel better within a week.

Symptoms include:

• Fever

- Dry cough
- Tiredness/weakness He
- Severe muscle and joint aches
- HeadacheSore throat
- Runny/stuffy nose

A flu pandemic is caused by a new virus. It is different from the seasonal flu because:

- Many people around the world could get sick at the same time.
- People could get sick at any time of year.

The most important thing to know about a flu pandemic is that the symptoms people have and the way you care for someone who is sick are very similar to the seasonal flu.

What is the common cold?

The **common cold** is caused by germs that affect your nose more than any other part of your body.

- Symptoms include:
- Stuffy nose
- Sneezing
- Runny nose
- Sore throat
- Wet cough



FLU?

WHAT IS THE

Is it a cold or is it the flu?

KEY DIFFERENCES						
WITH A COLD:	WITH THE FLU:					
You almost never have a fever.	You have a fever.					
You feel stuffiness in your head.	Your entire body feels sick.					
You feel a little sick.	You feel very sick.					
You can have a cold any time of year.	You can have the flu starting in early winter and continuing through early spring.					
There is no shot to protect you.	You can get a shot to protect yourself.					
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How do people get the flu?





CARING FOR PEOPLE AT HOME

Flu spreads easily from person to person. When people with the flu cough or sneeze, the flu virus is in the wet spray that comes out of their nose and mouth.

- If you are near them, you can breathe in the virus and get sick.
- The flu virus also gets on things you touch like doorknobs, phones, and toys. After touching these objects, the virus can infect you when you touch your mouth, nose, or eyes.

WHAT IS THE

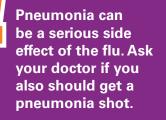
Lower your chances of getting & spreading the flu:

- Get a flu shot every year to prevent the flu!
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. If you don't have a tissue, cough into your inner elbow.
- Keep your hands away from your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Use a household cleaner to clean things that are touched often like:
- » Door and refrigerator handles
- » Computer keyboards/mouse
- » Phones
- » Kids' toys

- Wash your hands often with soap and warm water, or use an alcoholbased hand gel.
- Keep about 3 to 6 feet between yourself and other people.
- If you are sick, stay home. You can spread the flu even if you feel better.
 » Adults can spread the flu for about 5 days.
- » Kids can spread the flu for 7 days.
- If you are breastfeeding your baby and have the flu, you might want to wear a facemask so your baby doesn't get sick.

Get a flu shot every year!

Anyone who wants to lower their chances of getting the flu or giving it to someone else should get a flu shot every year.



- Some of us are more likely to have problems if we get the flu, so it's very important to get a flu shot every year. This includes:
- Children 6 months through 18 years old
- People 50 years of age or older
- Pregnant women
- People with certain health problems like diabetes, asthma, or heart disease
 Talk to your doctor about getting a shot if you have other health problems.
- Also, it is extra important to get a flu shot if you live with or take care of:
- Children younger than 5 years old
- People 50 years of age or older
- Pregnant women
- People with certain health problems

CARING FOR PEOPLE AT HOME

FLU PREVENTION

How to take care of someone with the flu:

When someone has the flu they feel very sick and tired. They feel achy, have a fever, and may get dehydrated. Here are signs and symptoms you can look for, and ways you can help someone feel better. **Fever** is a common symptom of the flu. It can come on suddenly and last for 3 to 5 days.

• A fever is a higher body temperature than

normal. It is measured using a thermometer.

- Temperatures can be measured by:
- » Rectum (bottom)
- » Ear
- » Mouth
- » Armpit
- Talk to your doctor about the different types of thermometers you can use, and which one will work best for you and your family members.
 » Digital thermometers are much safer than
- glass. Glass thermometers can break easily, and the mercury in them is very dangerous.



YOU SHOULD CALL A DOCTOR
ABOUT A FEVER WHEN:AGE:TEMPERATURE:Under 3 months oldFever of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher3 months to 5 years oldFever of 102°F (38.9°C) or higherOver 5 years oldFever of 104°F (40°C) or higher

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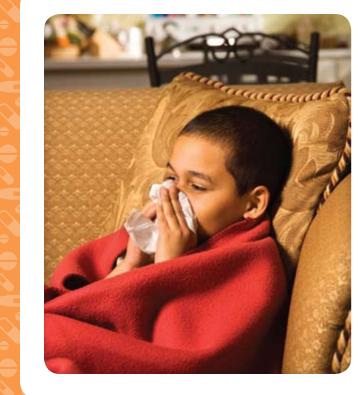
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You can buy these at most stores and pharmacies. Use medicine that is right for the person's age. Follow label instructions very carefully.

> Never give aspirin to children 18 and younger unless it is recommended by a doctor. It can cause a dangerous illness called Reye's Syndrome.

There are a few ways to treat a fever and make someone feel more comfortable:

- Give fever-reducing medicines like:
- » Acetaminophen (Tylenol® or store brand)
- » Ibuprofen (Advil®, Motrin®, or store brand)
- » Aspirin (Bayer® or store brand)
- Keep the room comfortably cool.
- Make sure they are wearing light-weight clothing.
- Have them drink fluids, especially water.
- Consider sponging them with lukewarm water if they have a high fever.



Doctors say we should not use alcohol rubs or cold water baths to bring a fever down. Alcohol can be absorbed through the skin and make a child sick. Cold water can cause shivering and make the bad effects of the fever worse.

CARING

FOR SOMEONE WITH THE



Dehydration can happen when you lose more water than you take in. You lose water when you sweat and even when you breathe. If you do not drink enough, or if you have a fever, diarrhea or vomiting, you can become dehydrated. Dehydration can be a serious problem – especially for small children, the elderly, and people with some illnesses.

Common symptoms of dehydration are:

FLU: WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Feeling thirsty
- Having a dry mouth
- Peeing less than usual
- Pee that looks darker than usual
- Dizziness
- Headache



To prevent dehydration:

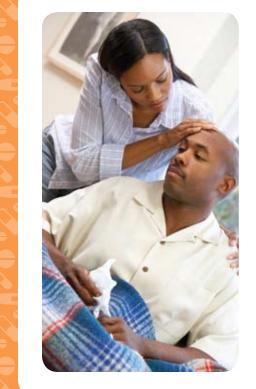
- Drink plenty of fluids like:
- » Water
- » Fruit or vegetable juices
- » Soups (chicken soup) and broths
- » Gatorade $\ensuremath{\mathbb{R}}$ (or store brand) for adults
- » Pedialyte® (or store brand) for kids
- Don't drink caffeine or alcohol.
- Keep drinks the sick person likes close to them so that they can take small sips often.
- Continue breastfeeding a child who is nursing.



Body aches are also symptoms of the flu. It is normal for a person with the flu to feel weak, tired, and achy. It is also normal to have a headache, a sore throat, dry cough, or a stuffy nose.

To help reduce their body aches, headaches, and tiredness you may want to:

- Give them medicine. The same medicine you give them for a fever will also help with their other symptoms.
- Help change their position in bed when they are awake.
- Help them get out of bed to take a short walk around the room (only 2 or 3 times each day).
- Make sure it's quiet and calm so they can rest and relax.



To help with a stuffy nose, sore throat, and dry cough you may want to:

- Use a clean cool-mist humidifier or steam from a hot shower or bath. This helps keep the nose and throat moist.
- Ask anyone who smokes not to smoke in the house.
- Use breathing strips for people having trouble breathing through their nose. Be sure to follow package instructions.
- Use a saline spray or saltwater rinse in the nose. Only do this for older children and adults.
- Have them sit up or keep their head raised to help reduce stuffiness. Crib mattresses and children's beds also can be raised slightly.
- Gargle with salt water several times a day to help reduce a sore throat or cough. To make salt water, mix ½ teaspoon of salt in 8 ounces of water.

CARING

Call a doctor if someone:

- Has a fever that lasts more than 3 days
- Has a fever or cough that goes away for 24 hours or more and then returns
- Has a fever with:
- » a stiff neck
- » a very bad headache
- » a severe sore throat
- » an earache
- » a rash
- Has less pee or dark pee
- Has green, brown-colored, or bloody mucus that comes up when they cough
- Has severe vomiting or vomits for a long time
- Has difficulty drinking or taking a bottle
- Is very fussy or sleepy (infants and children)
- Has any other unusual symptoms or concerns
- Has not gotten better after a week



Call 911 for an emergency if someone:

- Is having trouble breathing breathing is very fast, difficult, or painful
- Is having chest pain
- Is confused or unaware of their surroundings
- Is unable to wake up
- Has changes in their speech, or speaks in a way you can't understand
- Can't walk or sit up
- Has skin that is bluish or gray in color
- Has a seizure (uncontrolled twitching or shaking)

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CARING FOR SOMEONE

WITH

THE

How to prepare before you get sick:

Build a **Flu Care Kit** filled with the supplies you'll need if you get sick.

Keep the following supplies at home to use in case someone gets the flu. Get these supplies before you or someone you care for gets sick. It can be hard to find the time or energy to go to the store to buy what you need when someone is sick.

- A digital thermometer
- Non-aspirin medicines like:
- » Acetaminophen (Tylenol® or store brand)
- » Ibuprofen (Advil®, Motrin®, or store brands, etc.)
- Drinks like water, fruit juice, soups, and sports drinks
- Soap and alcohol-based hand gel



- Food that is easy to digest (crackers, oatmeal, rice, etc.)
- Extra supply of food, medicine, or equipment for those with special needs
- Cleaning supplies household disinfectant, paper towels, trash bags
- The name and phone number of the family doctor

Check the expiration dates on all your supplies every 6 months.

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Keep useful information handy. These forms will help you to be prepared for flu season...

My flu care information:

Doctor's name and phone number:

Pharmacy phone number:

Phone number of family or friends available to help when needed:

MEDICINES THAT YOU OR FAMILY MEMBERS TAKE REGULARLY

		DOCE
FAMILY MEMBER:	MEDICINE:	DOSE:

2

	THAT YOU OR FAMILY MEMBERS HAVE
AMILY MEMBER:	ALLERGY:
SPECIAL DIETS	STHAT YOU OR FAMILY MEMBERS FOLLOW
	STHAT YOU OR FAMILY MEMBERS FOLLOW SPECIAL DIETS:
SPECIAL DIETS	

Summary for your doctor:

Reason	you	are	cal	ling:
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Symptoms	of	patient:
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How long has the patient been sick? _

Age of patient:

PATIENT'S TEMPERATURE

TEMPERATURE:	TIME TAKEN:	HOW TAKEN:

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		<mark>?</mark> (j)						? (j		Ð ?							
Does the patient have any of the following?	What has been done to treat the illness?				D 3							? (j)				•?	
(circle yes or no)		<mark>?</mark> (j)						? (i		•?							
Proothing problems: VEC NO					Þ ?							? (j)				Ð ?	
Breathing problems: YES NO	Decision	<mark>?</mark> (j)						? (i		•?							
Vomiting: YES NO	List other health problems:				ÐQ		? (j)) ? (? ()				• ?	
Drinking fluids: YES NO		<u>?</u> (j)										- 14.	$\underline{3}(0)$				
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Eating normally: YES NO		<u>?</u> (j)					ww	/w.ma	iss.gov	v/dph	n/flu		$\underline{3}$				
Sleeping normally: YES NO	List medicines for other illnesses or health				Þ?											+ ?	
	problems:	<u>?(i)</u>						? (i		• ?			$)\underbrace{?}{(?)}$				
Travel in last 10 days: YES NO					Þ ?							<u>?</u> (j)					
Pregnant: YES NO	D	<u>?</u> (j)						? (j		•?							
-					Þ ?							? (j)				• ?	
Anyone else sick: YES NO	() (<mark>?</mark> (j)) (2) (? (i		•?)(?)(
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Massachusetts Department of Public Health

