
Taking Care of the Flu

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What should I do if I get sick?

Taking care of a person with H1N1 swine flu is just like taking care of a person with seasonal flu. If you get sick with flu-like symptoms, stay home and avoid contact with other people except to see the doctor. You can find a copy of our Flu Home Care Guide on our website at: www.sfcdep.org/flu. The guide offers a comprehensive overview of how to prepare for and take care of the flu.

When should I see a doctor?

Most people sick with the flu have mild disease and do not need to see a doctor or get tested. If you are at high risk for getting very sick with the flu, contact your doctor to discuss the need for treatment.

Call your doctor right away if you:

- Have difficulty breathing
- Are dehydrated from vomiting and diarrhea
- Have a fever that is higher than 101 degrees after taking fever-reducing medicine like acetaminophen (e.g., Tylenol) or ibuprofen (e.g., Motrin or Advil)
- Feel very sick

What should I do to protect others from getting the flu?

- Stay home and stay away from others until 24 hours after the fever is gone (without the use of fever-reducing medicine like acetaminophen (e.g., Tylenol) or ibuprofen (e.g., Motrin or Advil))
- Do not have visitors
- Try to avoid contact with other household members
- If possible, choose a room in your home away to stay in that is away from others in your household (for example, a spare bedroom with bathroom)
- If possible, choose one person in the household as your caregiver. Your caregiver should not be pregnant, over 64 years old, or have medical conditions like heart disease, lung disease, or weak immune system.
- Clean hands frequently with soap or alcohol based hand rub

Have everyone in the house use [healthy habits](#). See the answer to “How can I protect myself?”

Should people with the flu wear a mask?

If they want, a sick person can wear a face mask when around others to help prevent the spread of flu. Wearing a face mask limits the spread of tiny infected drops that are released when a person talks, coughs or sneezes.

Do I need to take anti-viral medicines to treat the flu virus?

Probably not. Anti-viral medicines are only available with a doctor's prescription. Most people with the flu (H1N1 swine flu or seasonal flu) get better without taking medicine.

Your doctor may prescribe anti-viral medicine if you:

- are very sick
- have a lung disease like asthma

- have a medical condition like diabetes, heart disease, kidney or liver disease, blood cell disease including sickle cell, or neurological disease that affects swallowing or breathing
- are pregnant
- are a child aged 2 years or under
- are age 65 and up
- have a weakened immune system (from disease or medicines)

What are the emergency warning signs?

Contact a doctor right away if a young child has these emergency warning signs:

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Blue-ish color of skin, lips, or fingertips
- Not drinking enough fluids or not urinating
- Not waking up or not interacting
- Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
- Flu-like symptoms that improve but then come back with fever and worse cough
- Fever with a rash

Contact a doctor right away if an older child or adult has these emergency warning signs:

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Not urinating

When going to the doctor's office or the emergency room:

- Inform the staff ahead of time that you think you have the flu
- If you call an ambulance, let the 911 operator know that you think you have the flu. Let the ambulance crew know too when they arrive
- Wear a face mask if you can
- Sit away from others as much as possible

Do I need to go to the doctor's office or the emergency room if I am only a little sick?

No. Doctor's offices and emergency rooms should be saved for people who are very sick. People should **not** go to the emergency room for a mild illness. Call your doctor's office for advice if you have questions.

Where can I get more information?

Visit the San Francisco Department of Public Health website which has information about H1N1 swine flu as well as regular seasonal flu: www.sfdcp.org/flu or call 311