

HOME ISOLATION

Instructions for Persons with Fever and Cough to Reduce Spread of Influenza in the Home

If you, your child or someone you live with has a fever and a cough, or were told they could have H1N1 flu, you should follow the recommendations below to help prevent the spread of disease to others who live in the home.

Influenza can be transmitted when an infected person coughs or sneezes. It is also possible to become infected by touching surfaces contaminated with the virus, and then touching your own nose or mouth.

Covering coughs and sneezes and washing hands with soap and water or with an alcohol-based hand rub are essential in stopping the spread of influenza.

During the period of illness, especially fever, it is possible for the sick person to transmit this virus to those with whom they have close contact (for example, someone living with or caring with the sick). To help prevent transmission of influenza virus to close contacts, the Joint Medical Service is asking that the sick person/ staff member/ dependant to **stay at home until at least 24 hours after their symptoms are completely gone.**

During that time, please follow these guidelines:

THE PERSON WHO IS SICK SHOULD:

- √ **STAY AT HOME until at least 24 hours after their symptoms are completely gone.**
- √ **CONTACT UN MEDICAL SERVICES:** Call the Flu Reporting Line on **0728 602 524** if you have flu- like symptoms. Medical staff will provide you additional advice and arrange for visiting you at home if necessary.
- √ **AVOID CLOSE CONTACT:** Limit contact with others. Avoid close contact such as kissing. Do not share tooth brushes, cigarettes or drinks with people who are well. People living in the home should limit contact with the sick person to the extent possible. Consider designating one person (not someone who is pregnant) as the primary person who will care for the sick person.
- √ If possible, stay in a room separate from the common areas of the house or apartment (a spare bedroom, for example if that's possible).
- √ **COVER YOUR MOUTH:** *ALWAYS* cover their mouth and nose with a tissue when sneezing, coughing or blowing the nose.
- √ **HAND HYGIENE:** *ALWAYS* wash hands with soap or water or use alcohol-based hand rubs after coughing or sneezing or throwing a used tissue in the garbage. Throw out used tissues with the regular garbage. Do not touch the nose, face or eyes after coughing or sneezing.
- √ **USE A MASK:** When close contact with other people in the home is unavoidable, the sick person should consider wearing a surgical mask to help prevent the spread of the virus. Surgical masks can be purchased in a pharmacy, medical supply or hardware

store. The person applying or removing the mask should wash their hands or use an alcohol-based hand rub afterward.

THE CLOSE CONTACTS SHOULD:

- ⇒ **SELF MONITOR:** Other household members should monitor themselves closely for the development of illness. If they get a mild illness with fever and a cough, they should stay at home and take the same precautions listed above.
- ⇒ **HOME VISITS:** Sick people should not have visitors while they are ill. If anyone who does not live with the patient must enter the home, they should avoid contact with the sick person.
- ⇒ **HAND HYGIENE:** All people in the household, especially those who must come in close contact with the sick person should clean their hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub frequently and after every contact with the sick person.
- ⇒ **MASKS:** Close contacts may consider using a facemask (e.g. surgical mask). These can be purchased at a pharmacy, medical supply or hardware store. If a reusable fabric facemask is used, it should be laundered with normal laundry detergent and tumble-dried in a hot dryer. The person applying or removing the mask should wash their hands or use an alcohol-based hand rub afterward.
- ⇒ **LAUNDRY:** If someone else is doing laundry for the sick person, they should avoid “hugging” laundry prior to washing it to prevent self-contamination and clean hands with soap and water or alcohol-based hand rub right after handling dirty laundry.
- ⇒ **MASKS:** Close contacts may consider using a facemask (e.g. surgical mask). These can be purchased at a pharmacy, medical supply or hardware store. If a reusable fabric facemask is used, it should be laundered with normal laundry detergent and tumble-dried in a hot dryer. The person applying or removing the mask should wash their hands or use an alcohol-based hand rub afterward.
- ⇒ **CLEAN THE HOME:** While the virus is likely not spread very well from contact with soiled household surfaces, cleaning of surfaces that are frequently touched (such as door knobs or any other object that they sneeze or cough on) may help prevent transmission. All hard surfaces such as bedside tables, bathroom surfaces, doorknobs, and children’ toys should be cleaned with a standard household disinfectant. If surfaces are visibly dirty use a household cleaner first, then a disinfectant. Wash hands after cleaning the area.
 - Dirty dishes and eating utensils should be washed in a dishwasher or by hand with warm water and soap.
 - Laundry can be washed in a standard washing machine with warm or cold water and detergent. Linens and towels should also be tumble dried on a hot setting. It is not necessary to separate soiled linen and laundry your laundry from other household laundry.

DOES THE SICK PERSON NEED TO TAKE MEDICINE?

Persons should only take medicine for influenza when a doctor prescribes it for them. For people with certain underlying medical conditions, a medicine called oseltamivir (Tamiflu®) may be recommended. Consult a doctor to see if the sick person needs medicine. If they have other underlying medical conditions, they should consult with their doctor. They should rest,

drink plenty of liquids, and take medications that they would normally take to treat their symptoms, such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen. People who are under 18 years of age should NOT take aspirin or aspirin-containing products (e.g., Pepto-Bismol™), as this can cause a rare serious illness called Reye's Syndrome in young people with the flu.

WHAT TO DO IF SYMPTOMS WORSEN

If symptoms worsen, (see SYMPTOMS OF ALERT below), Call the JMS Flu Reporting Line on **0728 602 524**. A doctor will assist you including on referral to hospital if necessary. If referred to an emergency unit, have a family member or friend drive the sick person in a private car or take a taxi.

Do NOT take public transportation (matatu or bus). If going to a doctor or hospital, make sure that the doctor or hospital is contacted before leaving the home and that the doctor/hospital is aware that the sick person may have the flu. After arriving, go straight to the receptionist or triage nurse so that the sick person can be put in a private room while they wait to see the doctor. The sick person may be asked to wear a mask and they should sit away from others as much as possible. If the sick person needs to take an ambulance to take them to the hospital, let the ambulance crew know that they may have the flu and also let the ambulance crew know the same when they arrive.

SYMPTOMS OF ALERT

Children:

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Lethargic or not interacting
- Increasing irritability

Adults

- Difficulty breathing
- Shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting

SHOULD HOUSEHOLD OR OTHER CLOSE CONTACTS TAKE MEDICINE TO PREVENT H1N1?

Most people who live with or have close contact with people with H1N1 do NOT need to take any medication to prevent illness. To find out whether preventive medication such as oseltamivir (Tamiflu®) is recommended, seek advice from JMS flu reporting line or/and call your doctor.

WHERE TO GET MORE INFORMATION

For more information, call the Flu Hotline on 762 1212; to report flu- like symptoms call the Flu Reporting Line on 0728 602 524 or visit the following websites that have information about H1N1 flu:

www.unon.org (Flu Alert) / www.cdc.gov / www.who.int