

# Flu Homecare Guide



Prevent



Prepare



Home Care



(Publication adapted from the Medical Surge Capacity Coalition of Central Utah)

## Flu Prevention

***Wash your hands often.***

***Don't Share the Flu!*** If you are sick stay home from work, school, and errands and avoid contact with others.

***Cover mouth and nose*** with a tissue when sneezing or coughing. If tissues are unavailable, sneeze or cough into your sleeve or elbow.

***Avoiding touching eyes, nose, and mouth.***

Use alcohol-based ***hand sanitizer***.

***Practice good health habits.*** Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage stress, drink plenty of fluids, and eat nutritious food.

***Keep your home clean.*** Regularly wiping down commonly touched surfaces like table tops, telephones, light switches, remote controls, and doorknobs with disinfectant can help

reduce the spread of germs.

A ***yearly flu shot*** is recommended as the first step in preventing flu. Seasonal flu vaccination is very

important for people at high risk for flu complications including young children, pregnant women, people with chronic health conditions, and people 65 and older. When a ***pandemic flu vaccine*** becomes available, follow the recommendations for getting it. You will need both vaccines.

During a flu outbreak or if you are ill practice ***social distancing*** by:

- Avoiding shaking hands with others
- Avoiding crowds
- Increasing distance between people

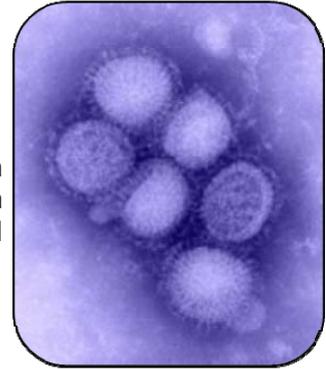


## Background

- Pandemic flu is a global outbreak of human disease. **It is caused by a new influenza virus that is unlike any previous flu** and is not recognized by the body's immune system. The lack of immunity means that a pandemic flu can pass readily from person-to-person, creating widespread illness.

*Only 28% of  
Americans have an  
Emergency Kit in their  
home.*

- **Seasonal Flu** affects people every year. Most people who get the flu can be cared for at home. The simple steps described in this booklet can make caring for someone with seasonal or pandemic flu easier to do.
- **A pandemic may come and go in waves, each of which can last for six to eight weeks.** A severe influenza pandemic could lead to high levels of illness, death, social disruption, and economic loss.
- In a pandemic, healthcare facilities could be overwhelmed creating a shortage of staff, beds, and supplies. **Follow the steps in this booklet to prepare yourself and those around you for a flu pandemic.**
- The goal of the pandemic flu immunization program is to vaccinate all persons in the U.S. who choose to be vaccinated.
- It is expected that most people will recover from the flu without needing medical care.



**CDC recommends that people with flu-like illness remain at home until at least 24 hours after they are free of fever or signs of a fever without the use of fever reducing medications**

## Hand Hygiene

Everyone should wash their hands regularly to prevent the spread of disease. You never know when you may come in contact with flu germs. Caregivers should wash their hands before and after giving care to the ill person.

### *Steps for Correct Hand Washing:*

- ① Wet hands with clean running water and apply soap
- ② Rub hands together to make a lather and scrub all surfaces, especially between fingers and under nails
- ③ Continue rubbing hands for 20 seconds
- ④ Rinse hands well under running water
- ⑤ Dry your hands using a paper towel or air dryer then use the paper towel to turn off the faucet



## Prepare Now

In a flu pandemic, hospitals and clinics may be overwhelmed. You may be asked to care for family members at home so that hospitals can care for the more critically ill. You may also choose to care for mild or moderately ill family members at home to avoid exposing them to other illnesses. Prepare a home care kit now in case there are shortages of supplies when you need them.

- Thermometer** (digital preferred)
- Alcohol Wipes** or cotton balls and rubbing alcohol (70% Isopropyl Alcohol)
- Acetaminophen (Tylenol™)** or **Ibuprofen (Motrin®, Advil™)** for fever reduction and pain
- Bleach** for disinfection—carefully follow product label instructions
- Tissues**
- Soap** for hand washing
- Paper Towels** to prevent spread of the virus from regular towels
- Alcohol Based Hand Sanitizer**
- Disinfectant Wipes** for hard surfaces
- Trash Bags**
- Box of Disposable Gloves**
- Juices, Liquids & Electrolyte Drinks** for hydration
- Masks**
  - Five or more for each family member
  - Surgical masks (available at medical supply stores or pharmacies)
  - N95 masks (available at hardware stores or discount stores)



- If there is a shortage of masks, family members who are not ill can write their name on their mask and reuse it for several days
- Ill individuals should change and dispose of masks daily
- ***Do Not Share used masks with another person***

## Electrolyte Drinks (Pedialyte™ or AdvoCare Rehydrate™)

Ingredients to make your own Electrolyte Drink (Oral Rehydration Solution):

- 1 quart water
- 3-4 tablespoons sugar
- ½ teaspoon baking soda
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon salt substitute containing potassium chloride
- Mix well and flavor with lemon juice or sugar free powdered fruit drink

In the event of a pandemic flu you may need to stay home for an extended period of time. You should gradually buy items so that you have a ***minimum of two to three weeks of emergency supplies for each person in your home:***

- Water for 3 days (1 gallon per person per day)
- Two week supply of food
- Canned meats/fish/fruits/vegetables
- Peanut butter/crackers
- Dried rice/beans/pasta
- Baby food
- Pet food
- Prescribed medicines
- Feminine hygiene products
- Diapers
- Batteries

## Flu Symptoms

Common cold symptoms are different than flu symptoms which often appear suddenly. Symptoms of pandemic influenza may be the same as the symptoms of seasonal influenza but may be more severe. Here is how colds and the flu differ:

| Symptoms         | Cold             | Flu                     |
|------------------|------------------|-------------------------|
| Fever            | Rare             | Usually Present         |
| Aches            | Slight           | Moderate to severe      |
| Chills           | Uncommon         | Fairly common           |
| Tiredness        | Mild             | Moderate to severe      |
| Coughing         | Productive cough | Dry, unproductive cough |
| Sneezing         | Common           | Uncommon                |
| Stuffy Nose      | Common           | Uncommon                |
| Sore Throat      | Common           | Uncommon                |
| Chest Discomfort | Mild to moderate | Often severe            |
| Headache         | Uncommon         | Common                  |

## When a Household Member is Sick

Flu virus is spread when contaminated droplets from the mouth and nose of an infected person come in contact with others. The virus can survive on surfaces for up to 8 hours. Follow these tips to protect yourself and others in your home:



- Keep everyone's personal items separate
  - Avoid sharing computers, pens, papers, clothes, towels, sheets, blankets, food or eating utensils
  - It is okay to wash everyone's dishes and clothes together if you use detergent and hot water
  - Wash your hands after handling dirty laundry
- Change hand towels daily, or better yet, use paper towels
  - Wear disposable gloves when touching or cleaning up body fluids
  - One person should be the caregiver
  - Pregnant women should not be caregivers
  - Caregivers should wear a mask

**Clean** door knobs, handles, and commonly touched surfaces using **disinfectant cleaning wipes or cleaner**. Following cleaning, surfaces may be sanitized with a household bleach solution of 2 cups water and 1 teaspoon (5 ml) bleach or other antiseptic. Please follow directions on product labels. Bleach may be dangerous to skin, mucus membranes, and the respiratory system. Keep away from children.

## Caring for the Flu

A person recovering from flu should have:

- Rest and plenty of liquids
- No alcohol or tobacco
- Medications to relieve flu symptoms
- Keep the sick person in a room away from the common areas of the house, preferably a spare bedroom with its own bathroom
- Keep the sickroom door closed
- Unless necessary for medical care, persons with the flu should not leave the home
- If available, antiviral medicines such as Oseltamivir (Tamiflu™) or Zanamivir (Relenza™) may improve the recovery time and reduce complications from flu—follow current recommendations from your doctor and health department



## Protecting Others in the Home

- The sick person should not have visitors other than caregivers – a phone call is safer than a visit
- All persons in the household should clean their hands frequently with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub, especially after every contact with the sick person or the person's room or bathroom
- If you must use cloth hand towels, change them at least daily and launder in hot water
- Maintain good ventilation in shared household areas by keeping windows open in restrooms, kitchen, and other common rooms
- If the person with the flu needs to leave the home for medical care, they should wear a mask
- Have the sick person wear a mask if they need to be in common areas or when being cared for
- Plastic toys may be cleaned in a dishwasher or with dish detergent and dried



## Protecting the Caregiver

- Avoid being face-to-face with the sick person
  - When holding small children who are sick, place their chin on your shoulder so that they will not cough in your face
  - Clean your hands with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand rub after you touch the sick person or handle used tissues or their laundry
  - Contact a telephone hotline or health care provider if the caregiver or other household members start showing symptoms
- Be sure to get adequate rest, nutrition, and breaks**



## Call the Doctor for ...

- A high fever
  - A fever of 100° or over is considered high in a baby up to 3 months
- Shaking chills
- Coughing that produces thick mucus
- Dehydration (feeling of dry mouth, excessive thirst or no tears produced)
- Worsening of an existing serious medical condition (such as heart or lung disease, diabetes, HIV, cancer)
- Difficulty breathing, fast breathing, or bluish color to the skin or lips
- Stiff neck
- Low blood pressure (fainting)



### **If you cannot reach your doctor, go to the Emergency Room for any of the signs below:**

- Difficulty responding or communicating appropriately
- Difficult breathing or chest pain with each breath
- Coughing up blood
- Inability to move an arm or leg
- Seizure
- Extended dehydration causing difficulty taking liquids
- Infant younger than 2 months old with fever, poor feeding, urinating less than 3 times per day or other signs of illness

[If you cannot get to the emergency room on your own call 9-1-1]



# Dehydration

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## Signs of Dehydration:

- Little to no urine output, which may become dark yellow in color
- Weakness or unresponsiveness
- Decreased saliva/dry mouth and tongue
- Sunken eyes
- Skin tenting (turgor):
  - Check this by picking up layers of skin between your thumb and forefinger and gently pinching for 1 second
  - Normally, the skin will flatten out into its usual shape right away
  - If the person is dehydrated, the skin will “tent” or take 2 more seconds to flatten out
  - This is best checked on the belly skin of a child and on the upper chest of an adult
- For infants, fewer than 3 wet diapers in the last 24 hours
- Dehydration in infants and the elderly can be dangerous – seek medical attention immediately if symptoms continue to worsen
- Patients who are getting enough liquids should urinate at least every 8-12 hours



## Prevent and Treat Dehydration:

Dehydration occurs when the body loses too much water and it's not replaced quickly enough. It can be serious. Follow these tips:

- In addition to plenty of liquids, give light, easily digested foods, such as soup and broth
- Give ice chips
- Give fluids that contain electrolytes — avoid alcohol, soft drinks, or soda pop
- If drinking liquids makes nausea worse, give frequent, small sips or spoonfuls until your loved one can drink again
- Continuation of breastfeeding is recommended for infants – you may need to give the child smaller, more frequent feedings
- With treatment you should observe an increase in urination, a lighter color of urine, and improvement in the person's overall condition

## Reduce Fever

Fever is a sign that the body is fighting the infection, and mild fevers do not always need to be treated. To help reduce a fever for comfort, do the following:

- Give plenty of fluids
- Give fever-reducing medication, such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen, as directed on the container's label
- Do not give aspirin to anyone younger than 20
- To relieve discomfort, give a sponge bath with lukewarm water
- Do not sponge with alcohol



## Comfort Care

In an extended pandemic, hospitals may be overcrowded. You may need to care for a terminally ill patient at home. The goal of comfort care (palliative care) is to prevent and relieve suffering. A good comfort caregiver will:

- Provide care for the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of the patient
- Be sensitive, kind and compassionate
- Respect the patient as an individual and listen to them
- Provide pain relief and improve the quality of life of the ill person
- Make the patient as comfortable as possible by preventing and relieving symptoms such as fatigue, nausea, shortness of breath, and loss of appetite

### If a Loved One Dies At Home

If a family member appears to have died at home, do not call 911 unless you want paramedics to perform CPR and other life-sustaining treatment.

Do not take a person who has died to the hospital.

If your loved one is under the care of a physician, hospice, or home health care, that is who you should call if you believe they have died. If your loved one has not been under medical care within 30 days of death, you must notify your local law enforcement agency -- either the police or sheriff. Or, you may call a funeral home and ask them to notify law enforcement. When you call, be prepared to give the following information:

- The name of the deceased
- The place of death, including address
- Your name and relationship to the deceased
- A phone number where you can be reached

The risk of infection from the body of a person who has died of flu is small. Wear a mask and use gloves. The greater risk will be from surfaces in the room, so the room should be cleaned well and disinfected.

# Keep a Care Log

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Write a new entry twice a day and when symptoms change

Record the following information:

- Date and time
- Temperature
- Skin color (pink, pale or bluish) and rash
- Record the amount of liquids consumed each day and through the night
- Record how many times the sick person goes to the bathroom each day and the color of the urine (clear to light yellow, dark yellow, orange, brown, or red)
- Record all medications, dosages and times given

## Influenza Care Log

Name of Patient \_\_\_\_\_ Name of Caregiver \_\_\_\_\_

| Date | Time | Observation | Temperature | Medications |
|------|------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
|      |      |             |             |             |
|      |      |             |             |             |
|      |      |             |             |             |
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# Emergency Contacts



**Information & Referral Line:** 2-1-1

**Davis County Health Department:** 801-525-5000

**Physician** \_\_\_\_\_

**Pharmacy** \_\_\_\_\_

**Schools** \_\_\_\_\_

**For More Information:**

**[www.daviscountyutah.gov/health/flu](http://www.daviscountyutah.gov/health/flu)**

**[www.flu.gov](http://www.flu.gov)**

**[www.bereadyutah.gov](http://www.bereadyutah.gov)**

Please refer to websites for updates & changes in flu information