

10 July 2009

protect yourself
protect others

WHAT TO DO IF YOU THINK YOU HAVE FLU

How do I know if I have flu?

Key symptoms of flu are **fever** (high temperature, usually 38°C or above) with a **cough** and/or **sore throat**. You may also feel very tired and achy, have a headache, runny or stuffy nose, diarrhoea and/or vomiting.

Most people who get flu (including pandemic H1N1/09) have a mild illness and do not need medical treatment or to see a doctor. Most people get better within a week after rest at home. Some people can have a severe illness.

What to do

1. **Find out if you are at high risk of severe illness (see list over the page).** If you are at high risk, seek medical care early if you get a fever with a cough and/or sore throat. Antivirals may be provided to help you get better quickly, but must be started within 48 hours of you getting sick for them to be effective. Phone 1800 358 362 (1800 FLU DOC) or your doctor.
2. **Protect others by staying at home** (except to seek medical care if necessary)
3. **Seek medical care quickly if you feel very unwell.** Look out for warning signs that can signal the need for urgent medical care:
 - difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
 - chest pain
 - severe or persistent vomiting
 - a high fever that lasts for more than three days, particularly when accompanied by a general worsening of symptoms
 - becoming less alert or confused
 - lethargy in a child - a child who has difficulty waking up or is not as alert as usual.
4. **Look after yourself**
 - Get plenty of rest.
 - Drink plenty of fluids, such as water
 - Eat a healthy diet with fruit and vegetables. Try frequent small meals if you don't feel hungry.
 - To help ease symptoms and control your fever, take paracetamol as directed. *Note: antibiotics do not work against viruses such as influenza.*

How can I protect others from catching flu from me?

- Stay at home (except to seek medical care if necessary) for 7 days after the onset of your illness and until you are fully recovered. If you need to leave home, wash your hands thoroughly before leaving, and wear a surgical face mask over your mouth and nose.
- Try to keep a large step away from others, especially anyone at risk of severe illness. Wear a surgical mask if you need to be within a large step of someone who is at risk.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing and sneezing and put used tissues in the rubbish straight away. Use the inside of your elbow if you can't reach a tissue in time.
- Wash your hands or use alcohol-based hand rub after coughing, sneezing, blowing your nose, touching used tissues or removing a face mask.
- Sleep alone if possible, and keep personal items like towels, face washers and toothbrushes separate. Do not share food or drinks.
- Keep frequently touched surfaces clean.



People who are at higher risk of severe illness from flu in 2009

- Pregnant women (particularly in the middle and later months of pregnancy)
- People with chronic respiratory (breathing) conditions like chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and people who require preventative medications for asthma
- People who are very obese
- Indigenous people of any age (because of high prevalence of other risk factors)
- People with other chronic conditions, including heart disease, diabetes mellitus, metabolic diseases, chronic kidney or liver disease, haemoglobinopathies, immune system suppression (for example due to cancer treatment, HIV/AIDS or medication) or chronic neurological conditions.

If you have any of the above risk factors, **seek medical care early** if you get sick with flu symptoms. Antivirals must be started within 48 hours of the start of illness for them to work properly.

People who may be at risk of severe illness from flu in 2009

- Smokers
- People who have sleep apnoea
- Women in the first three months of pregnancy
- Children under five.

If you have any of the above risk factors and get sick with a flu-like illness, monitor your symptoms and phone for advice if you get worse or are worried about how sick you are.

Need an interpreter? Phone TIS on 131 450 and ask them to phone 1800 358 362.

Want more information? Visit www.pandemic.tas.gov.au or phone 1800 358 362.