

Self-Care during an Influenza Epidemic/Pandemic

It may be difficult to get medical care during an influenza epidemic or pandemic because so many people will be sick. Many doctor's offices and hospitals may be overwhelmed. Therefore, it is important to be prepared to take care of yourself and your family at home.

Because you may need to be at home for a time during an influenza pandemic, you should make sure you have enough food and water at home for at least 3 days (1 gallon of water per person per day). Make sure you also have an extra supply of your regular medications. It is also important to have a list of important phone numbers, such as for family, friends, neighbors and your doctor.

Home treatment and self-care can relieve symptoms of influenza and can reduce the risk of further complications.

Symptoms of the flu include:

- Chills & Fever
- Headache
- Muscle aches & pains
- Sore throat, dry cough
- Runny nose, nasal congestion
- Fatigue, weakness,
- Loss of appetite

Important ways to care for yourself when you have the flu are:

- **Stay home if you are sick.** You will get the rest you need and not spread the virus to others.
- **Drink a lot of fluids.** Drink non-caffeinated beverages including water, juice, chicken broth and herbal teas.
- **Take over-the-counter medicines such as ibuprofen (Advil) or acetaminophen (Tylenol)** to help reduce fever, headaches and body aches.
- **Get a lot of rest.**
- **Take a warm bath.**
- **Avoid alcohol and tobacco.**
- **Wash your hands often.**



Hand washing steps:

1. Use soap and warm running water.
2. Scrub hands for at least 20 seconds; use a nail brush.
3. Wash all surfaces:
 - Between fingers
 - Under fingernails
 - Back of hands
 - Wrists
4. Rinse well and dry hands with a clean paper towel.

If any of the following complications arise, you should seek medical care immediately:

- Temperature over 104° F
- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Chest pain
- Confusion or disorientation
- Coughing up blood
- Severe vomiting
- Dehydration



**Tri-County Health
Department**

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