



Flu Pandemic

Self Care During a Flu Pandemic



During a flu pandemic, many people will be sick and it may be difficult to get medical care. For this reason, it is very important to be prepared to take care of yourself and others at home as much as possible.

There are antiviral drugs that can be prescribed by a doctor to treat the flu. During a pandemic, however, these antivirals are going to be in very short supply and will likely only be available for those people who are most likely to get sick or die from the flu, or for those persons who work in essential services such as health care, firefighters, police, etc.

Because you may need to be home for a time during the pandemic, it is a good idea to stock up on some basic supplies, such as food and water, for several days. (See "Emergency Stockpile" sheet.) Make sure you have several days supply of your regular medications on hand, and have a list of phone numbers for family, friends, neighbours, and your doctor.

Much of the time, home treatment and self care can relieve most symptoms and reduce the risk of further problems. If you get the flu, ways to monitor and improve your health at home include:

- **Stay home if you are sick.** This will ensure that you get the rest you need and that you don't spread the virus to others.
- **Drink lots of fluids.** This includes water, real juice, milk and herbal teas. It is best to have drinks without caffeine, because caffeine actually makes you lose fluid from your body.
- **Take basic pain/fever relievers.** Examples are acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen. Acetylsalicylic acid (ASA or Aspirin) should NOT be given to children or teenagers!
- **Use a hot water bottle or heating pad.** Applying heat carefully, for short periods of time, can help reduce muscle pain. Check the skin often when using a heating pad because the pad can cause burns and blisters.
- **Take cough medicine.** This helps especially if you have a dry cough.
- **Get lots of rest.**
- **Take a warm bath with Epsom salts.**
- **Gargle with a glass of warm water and/or suck on sugarless hard candy or lozenges.** They can ease your sore throat.
- **Use saline drops or spray or decongestants.** These help soothe or clear a stuffed nose.
- **Avoid alcohol and tobacco.** Smoking especially irritates damaged airways.
- **Avoid sharing anything that may carry germs** such as towels, lipstick, cigarettes, drinks or toys.
- **Wash your hands often.** Use soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds each time, or alcohol-based hand cleaners if your hands do not look dirty. This will help you avoid spreading the flu to others.
- **Ask your pharmacist for advice if you buy over-the-counter medicine.** Let him or her know if you have any chronic medical problems.
- **Call someone to help you until you are feeling better.** This is especially important if you are alone, are a single parent, or are responsible for the care of someone who is frail or disabled.

For seasonal flu, most healthy people feel better in about five to seven days. However, general tiredness and cough can last much longer, up to two to three weeks. *For pandemic flu, it is not known whether it will take longer to get better.*

**Simcoe**

P.O. Box 247, 12 Gilbertson Drive
Simcoe, ON N3Y 4L1
519.426.6170 / 905.318.6623

Caledonia

282 Argyle Street South
Caledonia, ON N3W 1K7
905.318.5367

Email: info@hnhu.org

Web: www.hnhu.org