



The flu

Caring for someone sick at home



**Centers for Disease
Control and Prevention**
National Center for Immunization
and Respiratory Diseases

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The flu may be more serious for some

Most people have been able to recover at home from flu without needing medical care. However, the flu can be more serious for some people.

People at high risk for developing flu-related complications include:

- Children young than 5, but especially children younger than 2 years old
- Adults 65 years and older
- Pregnant women
- Also, during the 2009 H1N1 pandemic, American Indians and Alaskan Natives seemed to be at higher risk of flu complications
- People with medical conditions including:
 - Asthma
 - Neurological and neurodevelopmental conditions [including disorders of the brain, spinal cord, peripheral nerve, and muscle such as cerebral palsy, epilepsy (seizure disorders), stroke, intellectual disability (mental retardation), moderate to severe developmental delay, muscular dystrophy, or spinal cord injury]
 - Chronic lung disease (such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease [COPD] and cystic fibrosis)
 - Heart disease (such as congenital heart disease, congestive heart failure and coronary artery disease)
 - Blood disorders (such as sickle cell disease)
 - Endocrine disorders (such as diabetes mellitus)
 - Kidney disorders
 - Liver disorders
 - Metabolic disorders (such as inherited metabolic disorders and mitochondrial disorders)
 - Weakened immune system due to disease or medication (such as people with HIV or AIDS, or cancer, or those on chronic steroids)
 - People younger than 19 years of age who are receiving long-term aspirin therapy
 - People who are morbidly obese (Body Mass Index, or BMI, of 40 or greater)

Follow the sick room rules

Protect well family members from getting the flu. If the sick person must leave the room to go to the bathroom or to a doctor's visit, ask them to wear a facemask. No facemask at home? Ask the sick person to use a tissue to cover coughs and sneezes.

Follow these 4 sick room rules:

1 Avoid having other people enter the sick room.

The sick person should not have visitors other than the caregiver. If visitors must enter, they should stay at least 6 feet away from the sick person.

2 Cover coughs and sneezes.

Ask the sick person to cover their nose and mouth with a tissue when they cough and sneeze. Ask them to throw used tissues in the trash.

3 Choose one caregiver.

If you can, choose only one caregiver to take care of sick family members. If possible, ask someone else to be the caregiver if you are pregnant or have certain chronic health problems. If you get the flu, it could be much more serious for you.

4 Keep the air clean.

Open a window in the sick room, if possible, or use a fan to keep fresh air flowing.

When to call the doctor to ask for advice

Call right away if you or your child has any of these symptoms of dehydration:

Signs of dehydration in infants and toddlers:

- Sunken soft spot on top of your infant's head
- Diarrhea or vomiting in infants 2 months or younger
- The baby seems much less active or more irritable than normal
- Fewer tears when crying or not making tears

Signs of dehydration in children and adults:

- Not making tears
- Less than normal amount of urine. In babies you may see fewer wet diapers or diapers that weigh less than normal
- Skin that is dry and takes long to go back to position when pinched
- Dry mouth or dry eyes
- Fast-beating heart
- Blood in the stool or blood in vomit
- The child has had a fever for 12 or more hours and also is not able to drink fluids, is throwing up or having diarrhea
- The child may be cranky or irritable, hard to wake up, have little energy, appear “rag doll weak”

Medicine safety and children

About medicines for children

- Store all medicines out of reach of children. Place them in a locked cabinet where children can't reach them.
- Buy pain and fever medicines that say “**children's**” on the label. Also, look for the words “acetaminophen” or “ibuprofen” on the label.
- Call the doctor if your child is very small or very large for his or her age so you will be sure to give the right amount of medicine. The dose you give your child depends on the child's age and weight.
- Use a special medicine spoon, dropper, or the cap that came with the medicine. Wash the cap, dropper, or spoon with soap and water after each use.
- Don't give cough or cold medicines to children younger than 4 years of age.

Warning

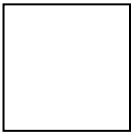
Think your child age 18 or younger might have the flu?

Never give them aspirin or products with aspirin in them.

Check **all** medicine labels to make sure they do not contain aspirin, also called salicylate. Although it mostly affects people age 18 or younger, Reye's Syndrome can strike anyone who takes aspirin products when they have the flu.

Reye's Syndrome is a rare, serious illness that can affect the blood, liver, and brain of someone who has recently had a flu virus. This illness can cause confusion, seizures, or coma. Talk to your child's doctor about signs and symptoms of Reye's Syndrome.

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