

How to Manage Influenza Symptoms

Influenza is caused by a virus and cannot be treated with antibiotics. It takes time for a person to recover from influenza. Help the ill person get enough to drink and feel as comfortable as possible. Call 911 or your health care provider if the symptoms get worse.

Dehydration

Prevent dehydration:

Adults need at least 2-3 quarts of fluids per day (1 quart per day for young children).

- Give clear liquids such as broth, juice (half-strength for children), tea, sports drinks, or oral rehydration formula**.
- Large amounts of caffeine can increase urine output; limit caffeinated drinks to 1-3 cups per day.
- Give cool drinks if the ill person has a fever.
- Food intake is not critical while the person is most ill, but fluid intake is.

Dehydration symptoms include:

- Thirst (often an early sign of dehydration)
- Flushed face
- Dry mouth
- Rapid and deep breathing
- Fast and/or weak pulse
- Sunken, tearless eyes
- Little or no urine output or dark-colored urine
- Dizziness made worse when standing
- Rapid increase in heartbeat upon rising to a sitting or standing position
- Cramping in the arms and legs
- Sleepiness or irritability
- Headache
- Lack of elasticity of the skin (when the skin is pulled up, it takes longer than usual to go back to its normal position)
- In infants, sunken fontanel ("soft spot" on top of head)
- Decreased alertness or change in consciousness

**Oral rehydration formula

- 4 cups water
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 3 tablespoons sugar or honey (honey should not be given to infants less than 1 year of age)

Mix together. Add lemon, lime or mint for flavor, if desired.

Fever

- One way the body fights infection.
- High fever (above 101°F oral) can cause dehydration.
- Call health care provider if fever is above 104°F and cannot be reduced.

Managing fever:

Give medicine for fever greater than 101°F (38.3°C).

- Acetaminophen* (Tylenol®): Do not give to anyone with liver disease unless their health care provider prescribes it.
- Ibuprofen* (Motrin®).
- Aspirin*: **Do not give to anyone less than 18 years old.**
- Ask your health care provider for products and dosage for children less than 2 years old.
- If fever is over 104°F:
 - Help the ill person drink cool liquids — especially water.
 - Place a cool cloth on the forehead.



*Follow medication package instructions for dosages and times between doses.

How to Manage Influenza Symptoms (continued)

Cough

- Can help clear breathing passageways.
- Phlegm or mucous may make breathing harder.

Managing cough:

- Use over-the-counter cough medicine*.
- Use cough lozenges* (adults only).

Shortness of breath

- Having a hard time getting a breath.
- Feeling of not getting enough air.

Managing shortness of breath:

- Help the person stay calm and take deep, slow breaths.

Chest pain

- If occurs only during coughing spell, treat with Acetaminophen* (Tylenol®) or Ibuprofen* (Motrin®).
- If not due to coughing or breathing, persists or get worse, call 911.
- If associated with shortness of breath or other symptoms, call 911.

Sore throat

- Scratchy or swollen throat makes swallowing hard.

Managing sore throat:

- Use throat lozenges* (adults only).
- Gargle with warm water.

Body aches

Managing body aches:

- Take a warm shower or bath (if able).
- Take Acetaminophen* (Tylenol®) or Ibuprofen* (Motrin®).
- People less than 18 years old should not take Aspirin or Aspirin-containing products.

Cyanosis

- Skin turns gray/blue because the person is not getting enough oxygen.

Managing cyanosis:

- Call 911 immediately.

Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea

- Can lead to dehydration (not enough fluids) — fever can also cause dehydration.

Managing nausea, vomiting, diarrhea:

- Give fluids:
 - Broth, juice (half-strength for children), tea, sports drinks, or oral rehydration formula.
 - 1 teaspoon every 5 minutes; if no vomiting after 30 minutes, double the amount every 30 minutes until they can drink on their own.

*Follow medication package instructions for dosages and times between doses.



Call health care provider or 911 if sick person:

- Has difficulty breathing or chest pain
- Has gray/blue lips or skin.
- Has fever above 104°F (above 101°F for a child) that cannot be reduced.
- Has severe or persistent coughing.
- Has a sign of dehydration (See "Preventing Dehydration" fact sheet).
- Has a seizure.
- Is unable to move an arm or leg.
- Is confused or not waking up.
- Improves and then symptoms return.