

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 2 - 3 quarts of fluids per day (1 quart per day for young children) to prevent dehydration.

- Give liquids such as broth, juice (half-strength for children), tea, sports drinks, or oral rehydration formula (see box).
- Large amounts of caffeine can increase urine output and increase dehydration.
 - Limit caffeinated drinks to 1-3 cups per day.
- Give cool drinks - not hot - 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 by standing
- Weakness
- Sleepiness or irritability
- Headache
- In infants, sunken fontanel ("soft spot") or not feeding

Oral rehydration formula:

- 4 cups water
- 3 Tablespoons sugar or honey (do not give honey to infants under 1 year of age)
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 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 healthcare provider if fever is above 104°F and cannot be brought down.

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 healthcare provider prescribes it.
- Ibuprofen* (Motrin®)
- Aspirin*: **Do not give aspirin to anyone less than 18 years old.**
- Ask your healthcare provider for products and dosage for children less than 2 years
- 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.



Cough

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

Managing cough:

- Use over-the-counter cough medicine.* Follow package directions for dosage and intervals between doses.
- 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 gets 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.

Call care provider or 911 if sick person:

- Has difficulty breathing or chest pain (See above).
- 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.

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