

Home Care

Guide for Influenza (the Flu)



www.summitcountyhealth.org


Get vaccinated

Influenza or "flu" can cause serious illness. Vaccination is the best way to protect yourself and your family.



Cover your cough or sneeze

Cover your mouth and nose with your sleeve or a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Toss your used tissue in the waste basket and wash your hands.



Fight the Flu



Wash your hands

Wash your hands often with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand cleaner.

It starts with you



Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth

If you touch surfaces with the flu virus, you can get the flu by touching your eyes, nose, or mouth.



Stay home if you are sick

Flu viruses go wherever you go when you are infected. Stay at home and check with your healthcare provider when needed.

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Influenza: What is it?

- Influenza - more commonly called the flu - is an infection caused by a virus.
- Flu symptoms include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills, fatigue and, in some cases, diarrhea and vomiting.
- Each of us can keep from spreading the disease by washing our hands, and covering our mouth and nose when we cough or sneeze.
- “Pandemic” means that the disease is spreading around the world and is making large numbers of people sick.
- In a flu pandemic, many people may become ill, so it is important that people try to care for the sick at home until they get well.
- During a flu pandemic, listen to your radio and TV or go online to get the latest information.



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How does the flu spread?

- Flu spreads mostly through respiratory droplets - spit and mucus - released during coughing and sneezing.
- People can also become infected by touching contaminated hard surfaces - like doorknobs, telephones or refrigerator handles - and then touching their own mouth, eyes or nose.
- Flu can spread to other people one day before a person becomes sick and up to five days after he or she feels symptoms.
- Children with the flu can spread it to others for up to seven days after their symptoms start.

Who is considered at risk for complications from the flu?

- Pregnant women
- Children under age 5
- Adults 65 or older
- Infants under 6 months
- Anyone with chronic medical conditions such as asthma, heart disease, diabetes or any immune-compromising condition
- Anyone under age 19 on aspirin therapy
- Residents of nursing homes and other chronic-care facilities

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How can I keep from getting or spreading the flu?

- Get a flu vaccine, when it becomes available.
- Cough or sneeze in your sleeve, or use a tissue and throw it away in the garbage.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
- Limit contact with others.
- Stay home if you are sick.
- Separate sick people from well people as best as possible.
- Wash dishes and laundry with soap and hot water.
- Clean surfaces touched by sick people with a household disinfectant that kills viruses (e.g., bleach, Lysol®, Clorox Clean Up® or other store brand).
- Health officials might recommend “social distancing” techniques, such as closing schools or reducing public gatherings, as ways to keep people from spreading the disease.



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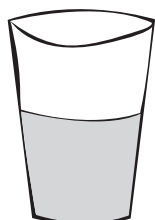
Helpful supplies

These supplies may be useful when caring for someone with the flu:

- Soap for washing hands
- Alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- Tissue
- Thermometer (you may need different types depending on the ages of people in the home)
- Fluids: water, fruit or vegetable juices, soups, broths, sports drinks for adults, and Pedialyte® (or store brand) for children
- Foods that are easy to digest: bananas, rice, applesauce and dry toast (BRAT diet)
- Acetaminophen (Tylenol® or store brand)
- Ibuprofen (Advil®, Motrin® or store brand)
- Throat lozenges
- Cough syrup (adult and children)
- A medicine measuring spoon or dropper for liquid medicine for children
- Extra supply of prescription medicine
- Household disinfectant to clean surfaces
- Paper towels for cleaning and hand washing
- Trash bags to line waste baskets
- Painter's or dust face masks
- Note pads, pens and pencils
- Extra supply of special foods, medicine or equipment that are needed by family members due to their age or chronic illness
- Children's games or puzzles

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Comfort and care



Many symptoms of influenza can be helped by drinking fluids such as water, juice diluted with water (equal parts), sports drinks mixed with water for adults (equal parts), oral rehydration solution for children (Pedialyte® or store brand), broth, soup, Jell-O® and popsicles. See recipes on page 7 for homemade rehydration drinks.

DO NOT give alcohol, medicines with alcohol or caffeine. **DO NOT** give medications that have been prescribed for others. **DO NOT** give aspirin or medications containing aspirin to anyone age 18 years or younger.

Symptom	Comfort Care
Cough	Drink fluids, suck on ice or ice chips, rest or sleep with head elevated, add moisture to the air by steaming water on the stove or using a humidifier.
Fever	Fever is a normal response of the body to fight infection. Drink fluids. Use medications (e.g., Tylenol® or store brand) as appropriate (see page 9).
Sore throat	Drink fluids, suck on popsicles or ice chips, mix 1 tsp of salt with 1 cup of warm water and gargle (do not swallow), use throat lozenges (e.g., Sucrets®, Chloraseptic® or store brand).
Headache	Darken room, decrease noise, place a cool, damp cloth on the forehead, drink fluids, use medications (e.g., Tylenol® or store brand) as appropriate (see page 9).
Muscle aches/ pain	Drink fluids. Use medications (e.g., Tylenol® or store brand) as appropriate (see page 9).
Diarrhea	BRAT diet (bananas, rice or rice cereal, applesauce and dry toast). (See Dehydration if diarrhea continues.)
Vomiting	Rest or sleep with head elevated, drink fluids (e.g., water, juice diluted with water in equal parts or non-carbonated soft drinks), eat Jell-O® and popsicles. Reintroduce foods slowly. (See Dehydration.)
Dehydration	Dehydration means the body is low on fluids because of fever, not drinking enough fluids, vomiting and/or diarrhea. Symptoms include dry skin, dry mouth, thirst, no tears, baby not wetting diapers, not urinating and/or dark urine. If a person is dehydrated, GIVE FLUIDS such as water, juice diluted with water (equal parts), sports drinks mixed with water for adults (equal parts), Pedialyte® (or store brand) for babies and young children, broth, soup, popsicles, Jell-O® mixed in a quart of water (do not refrigerate). DO NOT give alcohol or drinks with caffeine.

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Homemade rehydration drink recipes

Age	Recipe	Instructions
Under the age of 3 years	2 cups water (clean or bottled) ½ cup instant baby rice cereal ¼ level tsp table salt	Consult your pediatrician or health care provider before using this solution in babies under one year of age. This recipe should only be used as a last resort. Mix the ingredients well; DO NOT BOIL. If for any reason, you have been told to boil your water, boil it first, let it cool and then add the cereal and salt.
Over the age of 3 years	4 cups water (clean or bottled) 2 tbsp sugar ½ tsp salt	Mix the ingredients well; DO NOT BOIL. If for any reason, you have been told to boil your water, boil it first, let it cool and then add the salt and sugar. This can also be flavored with Crystal Light® or sugar free Kool Aide®.
Over the age of 12 years	1 quart water ½ tsp baking soda ½ tsp table salt 3 – 4 tbsp sugar	Mix well and, if you like, flavor with sugar free Kool Aide® or Crystal Light®.

Source: American Red Cross

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Taking a temperature

If a fever is suspected, a person's temperature should be taken several times per day before giving any fever reducing medication (e.g., Tylenol®).

If you can afford only one thermometer, get a digital thermometer, not an ear or pacifier type. Glass thermometers are not recommended, especially for children.

DO NOT leave a person alone when taking his or her temperature, especially children.

If you use a rectal thermometer for a baby or child, label it and **ONLY** use it for rectal use. Use water or a lubricant, such as petroleum jelly or Vaseline®, before inserting.

See Normal Temperatures below for the best way to take a person's temperature, depending on the age of the patient.

1. Clean and dry the thermometer with soap and warm water (not hot), a cotton ball soaked with alcohol, or an alcohol wipe.
2. If using a digital thermometer, leave it in place until the thermometer beeps.
3. Note the time, how the temperature was taken (by mouth, ear or armpit) and the temperature reading. (see Care Log)

Age	Where	Notes	Normal Temps (°Fahrenheit)
newborn to 3 years	rectum (by bottom)	Use lubricant for insertion of thermometer.	97.9°–100.4° F
3 to 5 years	ear, armpit, or rectum	Use lubricant for rectum. If using armpit, hold arm down.	ear: 96.4°–100.4° armpit: 94.5°–99.1° rectum: 97.9°–100.3°
5 years to adult	mouth, ear, or armpit	Don't bite the thermometer.	mouth: 95.9°–99.1° ear: 96.4°–100.4° armpit: 94.5°–99.1°

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Medicines

Non-prescription medicines may be used to relieve symptoms of the flu.



For pain and fever

- Fevers and body aches can be treated with acetaminophen (Tylenol®) or ibuprofen (Advil®, Motrin®).
- Warning! Do not give aspirin (acetylsalicylic acid) to persons age 18 years or younger who have the flu; this can cause a rare but serious illness called Reye's syndrome.
- Children 5 years of age and older and teenagers with the flu can take medicines without aspirin, such as acetaminophen (Tylenol®) and ibuprofen (Advil®, Motrin®) to relieve symptoms.
- Children younger than 4 years of age should NOT be given over-the-counter cold medications without first speaking with a health care provider.
- The safest care for flu symptoms in children younger than 2 years of age is using a cool-mist humidifier and a suction bulb to help clear away mucus.

For sore throat

- School-age children to adults: Throat lozenges or topical pain killers (e.g., Screts Maximum Strength®, Chloraseptic® spray or store brands).

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When to call for medical assistance



Due to the large number of people who may need medical help in a pandemic, it is very important that you call for medical advice before going to a clinic or the hospital.

ALWAYS call for medical help, or call 9-1-1, if **ANY** of these problems occur:

In children, emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention include:

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Bluish or gray skin color
- Confusion, not waking up or not interacting
- Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough

In adults, emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention include:

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion or not interacting normally
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough

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Cleaning and disinfecting

Disinfecting is more than just cleaning, it also involves killing germs spread by coughing, sneezing and touching hard surfaces.

Flu viruses and other germs can live 2 hours or longer on hard environmental surfaces like tables, doorknobs, and desks.



- Set up a sick room with a door that can be kept closed. Ensure the patient has a way to contact their family or caregiver (e.g., give the patient a bell to ring).
- Wash all dishes with soap and hot water or use disposable dishes, if available.
- Clean all bedding with soap and hot water. Do not shake patient's clothing or bedding when removing for cleaning.
- Clean equipment and hard surfaces in patient's room with hot soapy water or disinfecting solution (see above). Clean children's toys, too.
- Place used tissues in a plastic bag or trash can. Keep hand sanitizer at bedside.
- Always wash your hands after caring for the patient.

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Emergency contact numbers

Ambulance: **911**

Clinic: _____

Physician: _____

Phone: _____

Pediatrician: _____

Phone: _____

Urgent Care Center: _____

Phone: _____

Pharmacy: _____

Phone: _____

Elementary School: _____

Phone: _____

Middle School: _____

Phone: _____

High School: _____

Phone: _____

School District Main Number: _____

Day Care: _____

Phone: _____

Other important numbers: _____

For more information . . .

Summit County Health Department
www.summitcountyhealth.org

Utah Department of Health
health.utah.gov

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
www.cdc.gov

US Department of Health and Human Services
www.flu.gov

American Academy of Pediatrics
www.aap.org

World Health Organization
www.who.int/eng

To request additional copies of this home care guide call 435-615-3951.

Printable copies are also available at www.summitcountyhealth.org.

The Summit County Health Department thanks the Alaska Department of Health for sharing this guide with us and their hard work in putting it together.