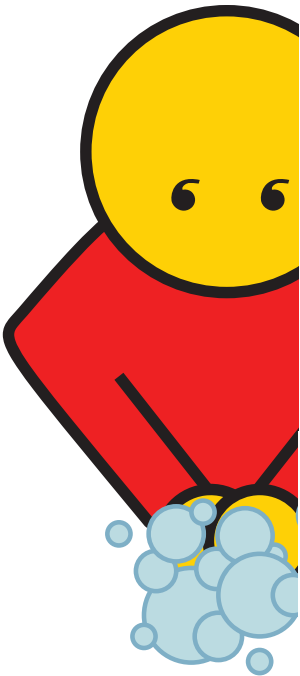


# Care of H1N1 (swine) flu patients in the home

**Relatives or other members of a household can care for the majority of H1N1 flu patients at home. However, you should seek medical help immediately if you notice that the patient has any of the following symptoms: Shortness of breath while resting, difficult or painful breathing and wheezing; a purple or blue color to the lips; vomiting and an inability to keep down liquids; bloody sputum; a fever that suddenly increases or lasts for more than four days; seizures; extreme ear pain; extreme drowsiness, disorientation or confusion.**



Home caretakers are at risk of developing the flu themselves. To help prevent it, wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water, or use an alcohol-based hand rub, after touching the sick person or spending time in his or her room. Wearing a simple medical mask may also provide some protection.

These additional precautions will also protect against spreading the virus.

- Consider designating one person in your household as the primary care provider, a move that limits exposure of others who are not ill.
- Ideally, the patient should use a separate bathroom that is cleaned daily with household disinfectant.
- After flu symptoms appear, the patient should remain at home until he or she has been without fever—and without fever-suppressing drugs such as acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Advil)—for at least 24 hours. The Centers for Disease Control believes people are most contagious while they are experiencing symptoms such as fever. However, children, especially younger children, and people with suppressed immune systems, such as AIDS patients and certain patients on chemotherapy, may be contagious for longer periods.
- It's safe to wash the patient's dishes and eating utensils along with those of others in the household. You can either use a dishwasher or wash them by hand with hot water and soap.

- Wash laundry as usual in a standard washing machine, using either warm or cold water and regular detergent. Then tumble dry on a hot setting. (It's unnecessary to separate the patient's soiled linen and laundry from other household laundry.) Before washing, remember to handle the patient's laundry carefully to avoid contamination and to wash your hands afterwards.
- Collect the patient's soiled tissues and other disposable items in a separate bag placed near the patient's bed. This can be disposed with regular household waste. Be sure to wash your hands each time you handle it.
- Keep surfaces (especially bedside tables, surfaces in the bathroom, and toys) clean by wiping them down with a household disinfectant.
- Limit visitors. Most people should not enter the home while the patient is actively ill. Those who must visit should avoid getting too close (less than roughly six feet away) to the sick person.
- Check yourself and other household members regularly for any development of a fever or other symptoms of H1N1 flu. If you see signs of illness, contact your health care provider.

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The following sources were used to develop the recommendations in this guide and contain updated information.

- *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:* [www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/habits](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/habits)
- *World Health Organization:* [www.who.int/en/](http://www.who.int/en/)
- *Johns Hopkins Office of Critical Events Preparedness And Response:* [www.hopkins-cepar.org](http://www.hopkins-cepar.org)
- *Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene:* <http://www.dhmh.state.md.us/>
- *Baltimore City Health Department:* [www.baltimorehealth.org](http://www.baltimorehealth.org)