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# Taking Care of a Sick Person in Your Home

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*This document has been updated in accordance with the [Guidance on Facemask and Respirator Use](#). This document provides interim guidance and will be updated as needed.*

Novel H1N1 flu virus infection (formerly known as swine flu) can cause a wide range of symptoms, including fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people have reported diarrhea and vomiting associated with novel H1N1 flu. Like seasonal flu, novel H1N1 flu in humans can vary in severity from mild to severe. Severe disease with pneumonia, respiratory failure and even death is possible with novel H1N1 flu infection. Certain groups might be more likely to develop a severe illness from novel H1N1 flu infection, such as pregnant women and persons with chronic medical conditions. Sometimes bacterial infections may occur at the same time as or after infection with influenza viruses and lead to pneumonias, ear infections, or sinus infections.

The following information can help you provide safer care at home for sick persons during a flu outbreak or flu pandemic.

## How Flu Spreads

The main way that influenza viruses are thought to spread is from person to person in respiratory droplets of coughs and sneezes. This can happen when droplets from a cough or sneeze of an infected person are propelled through the air and deposited on the mouth or nose of people nearby. Influenza viruses may also be spread when a person touches respiratory droplets on another person or an object and then touches their own mouth or nose (or someone else's mouth or nose) before washing their hands.

People with novel H1N1 flu who are cared for at home should:

- check with their health care provider about any special care they might need if they are pregnant or have a health condition such as diabetes, heart disease, asthma, or emphysema
- check with their health care provider about whether they should take antiviral medications
- stay home for 7 days after your symptoms begin or until you have been symptom-free for 24 hours, whichever is longer, except to seek medical care or for other necessities
- get plenty of rest
- drink clear fluids (such as water, broth, sports drinks, electrolyte beverages for infants) to keep from being dehydrated
- cover coughs and sneezes. Clean hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub often and especially after using tissues and after coughing or sneezing into hands
- wear a facemask – if available and tolerable – when sharing common spaces with other household members to help prevent spreading the virus to others. This is especially important if other household members are at high risk for complications from influenza. For more information, see the [Interim Recommendations for Facemask and Respirator Use](#)
- avoid close contact with others – do not go to work or school while ill
- be watchful for emergency warning signs (see below) that might indicate you need to seek medical attention.