

# Managing Illness

## What do I do if I feel sick?

[Go home and stay away from others.](#) Students, faculty and staff (whether on or off campus) who appear to have an influenza-like illness (ILI) should self-isolate (i.e., stay away from others) in their dorm room or home [for at least 24 hours after their fever is gone](#) (without the use of any fever-reducing medicine such as Tylenol).

If you must leave your home or dorm room (for example, to seek medical care or other necessities) it is imperative that you cover your nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing. A surgical loose-fitting mask can be helpful for persons who have access to these, but a tissue or other covering is appropriate as well.

Contact your doctor or campus health services to report the illness by telephone or other remote means before seeking care. Advise your department chair/supervisor that you will be out due to an ILI. It is acceptable to do this by phone in order to avoid spreading germs unnecessarily.

## What if a member of my family is sick?

When providing care to a household member who is sick with influenza, the most important ways to protect yourself and others who are not sick are to:

### Caretakers

- If possible, have only one adult in the home take care of the sick person.
- Avoid being face-to-face with the sick person. When holding small children who are sick, place their chin on your shoulder facing away from you so that they will not cough in your face.
- People at increased risk of severe illness from flu should not be the designated caretaker, if possible.
- If you are in a high risk group for complications from influenza, you should avoid close contact (within 6 feet) with household members who are sick with influenza.
- Keep the sick person away from other people (especially others who are at high risk for complications from influenza) as much as possible. If possible use a room separate from the common areas of the house and keep the sickroom door closed. (For example, use a spare bedroom with its own bathroom, if that's possible.)

### Household Cleaning

- Shared spaces and bathrooms should be cleaned daily with household disinfectant.
- Keep surfaces (especially bedside tables, surfaces in the bathroom, and toys for children) clean by wiping them down with a household disinfectant according to directions on the product label.
- Linens, eating utensils, and dishes belonging to those who are sick do not need to be cleaned separately, but importantly these items should not be shared without washing thoroughly first.
- Wash linens (such as bed sheets and towels) by using household laundry soap and tumble dry on a hot setting. Avoid "hugging" laundry prior to washing it to prevent contaminating yourself. Clean your hands with soap and water or alcohol-based hand rub right after handling dirty laundry.
- Eating utensils should be washed either in a dishwasher or by hand with water and soap.
- Remind the sick person to cover their coughs, and clean their hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub often, especially after coughing and/or sneezing.
- Throw away tissues and other disposable items used by the sick person in the trash. Wash your hands after touching used tissues and similar waste.

- If possible, consideration should be given to maintaining good ventilation in shared household areas (e.g., keeping windows open in restrooms, kitchen, bathroom, etc.).

#### **Handwashing**

- Have everyone in the household clean their hands very often, using soap and warm water or an alcohol-based hand rub. Children may need reminders or help keeping their hands clean.
- Use paper towels for drying hands after hand-washing. Be sure towels are placed in the trash.

#### **Anti-viral medication**

- Ask your health care provider if members of the household—particularly those members who may be pregnant or have chronic health conditions—should take antiviral medications such as oseltamivir (Tamiflu®) or zanamivir (Relenza®) to prevent the flu.

## **Should We Use Face Masks?**

In community and home settings, the use of facemasks and respirators generally are not recommended. However, for certain circumstances a facemask may be considered an appropriate choice:

1. If it is completely unavoidable that a person with an increased risk of severe illness from flu and must be near an infected person for a short period of time both parties may want to wear masks.
2. If an infected person will in going to the doctor's office, a mask for the infected person may be appropriate.
3. If an infected person must visit shared spaces in the house and cannot be relied upon to cover coughs and sneezes effectively a mask may be appropriate.

Facemasks do not seal tightly to the face and are used to block large droplets from coming into contact with the wearer's mouth or nose. Facemasks help stop droplets from being spread by the person wearing them. They also keep splashes or sprays from reaching the mouth and nose of the person wearing the facemask. They are not designed to protect against breathing in very small particle aerosols that may contain viruses. Facemasks should be used once and then thrown away in the trash.

## **Where Do I Find More Info?**

There is a tremendous amount of information related to flu and specifically H1N1 available through the Center for Disease Control (CDC). The website is <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/>. The College will post information specific to our own programs via our website at [http://www.messiah.edu/offices/engle\\_center/](http://www.messiah.edu/offices/engle_center/).

Materials adapted from the CDC website.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 1600 Clifton Rd. Atlanta, GA 30333, USA

800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636) TTY: (888) 232-6348, 24 Hours/Every Day - [cdcinfo@cdc.gov](mailto:cdcinfo@cdc.gov)