

# Influenza

**Te Whatu Ora**  
Health New Zealand

Capital, Coast, Hutt Valley and Wairarapa

For most people with influenza (the flu), home is the best place to rest and recover.

This information will help you care for someone with flu, tell you when to get extra help and help stop others getting sick.

## Flu symptoms

COVID-19, flu and colds have similar symptoms

The symptoms for a cold or flu can be similar to COVID-19. If you are sick, stay home. Call your health provider or Healthline and follow their advice. They may advise you to have a COVID-19 test, and self-isolate while you wait for the results.

You are more likely to have the **flu** if you have:

- A severe fever (over 38°C) lasting several days.
- A cough and sore chest.
- Severe exhaustion and aches and pains.

You are more likely to have the **cold** if you have:

- A blocked nose.
- A lot of sneezing.
- A sore throat.

Make sure the sick person comes into contact with as few people as possible, including contact between the sick person and others living in the house.



## Giving care

How to care for someone with flu



A person with the flu needs a few key things to help them recover:

- Plenty of fluids to drink - water and juice are best.
- Do not give tea or coffee.
- NO ALCOHOL.
- Use paracetamol for pain and fever, make sure you check and follow the dose limits on the packet.
- Do NOT give aspirin to children or teenagers who have the flu or flu-like sickness – it can cause serious illness.
- Light clothing and blankets, and cool flannels can help with fever.
- Lots of rest is important. The flu is a serious illness and may make you feel weak.
- Dispose of used tissues safely.

## Getting help

### What to do if someone gets much worse

If the person you are looking after has any of these symptoms, call your family doctor or Healthline 24 hours on 0800 611 116 for advice:

- Suddenly feeling much worse.
- Very high temperature (over 40°C or 104°F) that won't come down with paracetamol.
- Pain in the chest.
- Trouble breathing.
- Bluish colour around the lips and cheeks.
- Fainting.
- Confusion - not making sense or trouble talking in complete sentences.
- Persistent vomiting or diarrhoea.
- Develop a rash.

It is also important to seek medical advice early if you are concerned, and especially if there are any danger signs, even if you have been seen before. Other serious conditions can also look like the flu, including meningococcal disease.

**IF THE PERSON STOPS BREATHING, BECOMES UNCONSCIOUS OR HAS SEIZURES (FITS), CALL 111.**

If you are concerned about your health or the health of your child, call healthline on 0800 611 116 for free advice 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

## Staying well

### How to protect yourself and others in your home

When caring for a person with the flu, try and keep your face at least a metre away, especially if they are coughing or sneezing. Wear a mask and encourage others in the house to do the same.

The most important thing to remember is to

**KEEP YOUR HANDS CLEAN!**



Wash your hands with hot water and soap for 20 seconds and dry them for 20 seconds – or use an alcohol-based hand sanitiser.

Do this:

- After being around or touching the person with cold or flu symptoms.
- After handling clothes, linen, towels or items handled by the sick person.
- After using the toilet.
- Before eating or preparing food.

## Keeping clean

### Cleaning to stop the spread of flu



Influenza is a highly contagious respiratory virus. It spreads through the air when an infected person coughs or sneezes or by touching their hands.

- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, and then throw the tissue away,
- OR
- Cough or sneeze into your elbow or upper sleeve, not your hands.

You need to make sure that you take more care with household hygiene.

- Clean surfaces touched by the person with the flu (phones, remote controls etc).
- Do NOT share cutlery, cups or plates with the person with the flu.
- Do NOT shake out dirty clothes, linen or towels used by the person with flu.
- Any waste, like tissues, that might be infectious should be placed with normal rubbish for collection.