

INFLUENZA A(H1N1)

Self-care Guide



What you need to know
What you need to do

Protecting yourself and others

Keep this guide



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Adapted edition by:

First Nations of Quebec and Labrador Health and Social Services Commission (FNQLHSSC) with approval of the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux du Québec.

The masculine gender used in this document applies both to men and women.

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Why a self-care guide?

Health care begins at home.

This guide will help you make the best decisions regarding your health and the health of your loved ones during an A(H1N1) Influenza pandemic.

This guide tells you:

- the best ways to protect against flu;
- how to take care of yourself and give basic care to people around you;
- when and whom you should see if you need care or services.

Keep this guide.

The original version of the 'Self-Care Guide' is available in French and English on the Website, www.pandemiequebec.gouv.qc.ca

The 'Self-Care Guide' **adapted version** will be distributed in all non conventioned First Nations communities¹. It will also be available in French and English on the First Nations of Québec and Labrador Health and Social Services Commission Website, www.cssspnql.com and on the Website, www.pandemiequebec.gouv.qc.ca

Keep yourself informed!

Regularly check the Québec government's website on pandemics: www.pandemiequebec.gouv.qc.ca

Watch the media (television, newspapers, radio, the Internet) for notices and instructions from the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux.

¹ Excluding Crees, Inuits and Naskapis

About Influenza and pandemics

Definitions

Influenza (flu) is a very contagious infection of the lungs and airways. It is caused by an Influenza virus that can be transmitted from person to person. A pandemic occurs when a new strain of flu virus - one that is different from the Influenza viruses that go around each year - spreads throughout the world. Since most people will have no immunity to this new strain of virus, it will cause more cases of sickness.

How the virus spreads

The flu virus spreads very easily. An infected person can be contagious:

- up to 24 hours before symptoms begin;
- up to 7 days after symptoms begin.

Contagiousness is higher in the first three to four days after the onset of symptoms.

The virus is transmitted in droplets from the nose and mouth. When an infected person sneezes or coughs, these droplets are sprayed into the air. If the person covers his or her mouth and nose, the droplets will be trapped on the hands, or on the mask, tissue, or handkerchief used.

Influenza can be caught by:

- touching a contaminated surface with the hands and then touching the nose, mouth, or eyes;
- touching an infected person, for example, kissing them or shaking their hand.

Symptoms generally appear one to four days after infection, but in rare cases can take up to seven days to appear. The Influenza virus most easily survives in cool, dry places. It is spread when people are in close contact with one another. This type of close contact occurs in many situations, including living in the same household as others, caring for a sick person or being in public places, or participating in group activities such as community gatherings, sports events, etc.



About Influenza and pandemics

Influenza

{ People at risk }

Most people in good health recover from Influenza on their own. However, certain groups are at risk of developing very serious complications from the disease. **As soon as flu symptoms appear (see the table of symptoms on page 3),** these people must consult a physician, the health center or the nursing station of the community to enquire on the guidelines to be followed in order to receive early antiviral treatment within 48 hours.



Symptoms

The common cold, which is a much more benign infection of the airways, is often mistaken for flu.

SYMPTOM SEVERITY























Absent



Rare - Moderate



Present - Intense

SYMPTOMS		FLU	COLD
	Fever	Usual. Temperature between 38°C and 40°C (between 100,4°F and 104°F). Sudden onset. Lasts 2 to 5 days	
	Cough	Usual Lasts about 1 week	
	Headaches	Usual, sometimes severe	
	Aches and pains	Usual, sometimes severe	
	Fatigue	Usual, intense Lasts a few days, occasionally longer	
	Nausea and vomiting	Usual, especially in children	
	Nasal congestion and runny nose	Rare	
	Sneezing	Rare	
	Sore throat	Rare	
	Chest pains	Usual, sometimes severe	

If you have flu symptoms, you can call Info-Santé 8-1-1, the health center or nursing station of your community or see a doctor, depending on the seriousness of your symptoms. To avoid infecting others, it is important that you follow the instructions from Info-Santé or your doctor.

Symptoms in children and young people

Children's symptoms may be different from those of adults. Be vigilant if your child **has a fever** and has one or more of the symptoms listed in the following table (see also the section Caring for sick children, page 9).

(Advice: It is important to have a thermometer available at all times)

0-5 YEARS	6-18 YEARS
Irritability	Coughing
Loss of appetite	Muscle pains
Rasping cries	Headache
Rasping cough	Intense fatigue
Diarrhea	Sore throat
Vomiting	Nasal congestion
Abdominal pains	Runny nose
Shortness of breath	Shortness of breath

Recovery

In general, most people return to their normal activities soon after their illness. The antibodies you develop while ill will protect you in future against the virus that infected you.

Protection, prevention and health advice



Health advice

Ways to protect yourself against Influenza

Wash your hands often

Frequent handwashing is the best way to protect yourself and others against Influenza. People living with you or caring for you should also wash their hands frequently. Teach children the right way to wash their hands (see page 10).

When soap and water are not available, you can use antiseptic towelettes, or alcohol-based (60% to 70%) antiseptic gels, foams and liquids.

Avoid contact with infected people

When a member of your family or household has flu, you must avoid contact with his or her personal items such as towels, utensils, cups, etc. The same goes for other people in the household, since a person can be contagious even without having any symptoms.

Get vaccinated

Seasonal flu vaccine does not protect against the new A(H1N1) flu virus. The Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux will provide the public with guidelines regarding vaccination against A(H1N1) flu and seasonal flu in newspapers, on the radio and television, and on the Internet (www.pandemiequebec.gouv.qc.ca). Persons at risk however, should also receive the vaccine for infectious pneumococcal. Check with a health professional to determine if you are a person at risk.

Pay attention to notices and guidelines from the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux in the media (television, newspapers, radio, the Internet) as well as the ones from health center or nursing station of your community.

People at risk of complications should still receive the pneumococcal vaccine. Check with a health professional to find out whether you are among those at risk of complications (see page 2).

Also, the health center or the nursing station of your community will communicate to you the information relating to the guidelines to be followed concerning the vaccine against the A(H1N1) flu as well as the vaccine against the seasonal flu through mailings, articles in the local newspaper, spots on the community radio station, etc.

Wear a face mask

You should wear a face mask (see page 11) if you are in contact with a sick person who coughs or sneezes.

Precautions and care

Get some rest

You will feel weak and tired until the fever subsides. Rest will help you fight off the infection. **Limit contact** with others until your symptoms have ended. If your symptoms last longer than seven days, you can resume your activities if your general condition allows.

Drink plenty of fluids

It is important to drink fluids frequently and in sufficient quantity, because fever makes you sweat, causing you to lose a great deal of water.

Take cold or warm drinks, as you prefer, but avoid alcoholic drinks and drinks containing caffeine (e.g. coffee, tea, or energy drinks). Alcohol and caffeine cause you to urinate, increasing fluid loss. Watch out for signs of dehydration (especially infrequent urination or dark urine), dizziness, headache, and confusion.

If you are sick, stay home as soon as symptoms begin.

Protect those around you

To protect those around you, follow the guidelines below until your symptoms disappear:

- Isolate yourself to avoid infecting the people you live with.
- When you sneeze or cough, cover your nose and mouth, preferably with a paper tissue (see page 11). Wash your hands afterwards.
- If you don't have a tissue, sneeze or cough into your elbow or upper arm instead of your hand, since these parts of your arm don't usually come into contact with people or objects (see page 11).
- Spit into paper tissues.
- Throw tissues away in a garbage can lined with a garbage bag. Keep it closed or out of reach of children.
- Keep your visitors to a minimum.

Wear a face mask

If you have a fever or if you are coughing and sneezing, wear a face mask when you are with others.





Keep your home clean

Since the Influenza virus can survive up to two days on hard surfaces, it is important to clean counters, washbasins, and all other surfaces that are frequently touched with the hands. Cleaning these surfaces eliminates any viruses found there. Use water with soap or domestic detergents. A disinfectant solution (for example, 1 part bleach in 50 parts water) is highly effective for toilets and washbasins.

If you are sick, your bedding, towels, clothes and dishes can be washed with those of other people in the household using regular detergents.

Get help

Most people have the resources they need to deal with the current situation. However, some people may feel the need to be informed or reassured about events or about their own health.

If you feel any anxiety, don't hesitate to ask for or accept help. Talk to family and friends to find people who can step in to provide help if the need arises. If you don't know anyone that can help you, call your community's health center or nursing station or your local CSSS. You can also contact Info-Santé 8-1-1 for information, or the Centre de relations avec la clientèle of Services Québec (see page 13).

Stay informed

For up-to-date information, listen to the radio, watch television, read newspapers, and visit the government's website on the pandemic: www.pandemiequebec.gouv.qc.ca

Notices and guidelines for the public from the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux will appear in the media to direct people to facilities where they can see a doctor, receive care, get access to antivirals or get vaccinated. Always observe current notices and guidelines: they may change as the situation develops.

Where First Nations are concerned, notices and guidelines can originate from the local authorities, either the Band Council, the health center or the nursing station of the community.

Teach your children the basic rules

Show them:

- how to wash their hands properly with soap and water (see page 10);
- how to blow their noses or sneeze into paper tissues (see page 11);
- how to cough or sneeze into their elbow or upper arm (see page 11).

Remind them often to stay away from people who are sick.

Keep your **Decision Chart** (see page 12) visible or handy. This chart will help you quickly decide on the best resource depending on the situation.



Wash your hands often



Avoid contact with infected people



Get vaccinated



Wear a face mask



Get some rest



Drink plenty of fluid



Keep your home clean



Get help



Avoid tea and coffee



Avoid alcoholic drinks



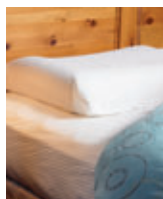
Stay informed



Protect those around you



Teach your children the basic rules



If you are sick, stay home as soon as symptoms begin.



If you don't have a tissue, sneeze or cough into your elbow or upper your arm instead of your hand.



Wear a face mask.



Wash your hands often.



Spit into paper tissues.



Throw tissues away in a garbage can lined with a garbage bag. Keep it close or out of reach of children.



Keep your visitors to a minimum.

Precautions at work

Useful tools can be found on the Québec government's pandemic website: www.pandemiequebec.gouv.qc.ca for the work environment. Keep in mind that all protection and prevention guidelines apply to all workers, whatever they do to work.

Medication for relieving symptoms

Use medication properly

Unless there are complications, or factors that create a risk of complications (see page 2), Influenza does not need to be treated with medication. However, non-prescription drugs sold over the counter or that are available at the health center or at the nursing station of your community can be used to relieve the symptoms of Influenza. Before using them, carefully read the labels and take only the recommended dosage. Avoid using multiple products containing the same ingredients at the same time (e.g. Tylenol™ and Tylenol Sinus™, which both contain acetaminophen). If you suffer from chronic conditions (e.g. hypertension, glaucoma), consult your pharmacist, your community health center or nursing station or Info-Santé 8-1-1 before using these products.

The use of traditional medicines must be done judiciously. To this effect, it is recommended to consult your community health center, nursing station or your pharmacist before using these products.

If the severity of your symptoms (see the **Decision Chart**, page 12) or your condition (see page 2) leads you to consult a designated care facility.

Do not forget that it is important to bring a complete, up-to-date list of all the medications that you are taking, and give it to the health professionals who see you.

Depending on their evaluation of your condition, health professionals may decide to give you antiviral medications. These can help reduce the duration and severity of symptoms. Take the medication you are prescribed according to the instructions, and contact your health center or nursing station, or your pharmacist about any problems you may have while taking it. Finally, always keep medications out of the reach of children.

To reduce fever (38°C/100,4°F or higher), take acetaminophen (e.g. Tylenol™) or ibuprofen (e.g. Advil™, Motrin™), except if advised not to by your doctor or if you are allergic to these medications.

Unless directed by a doctor or pharmacist, or by the nursing personnel of your health center or nursing station, do not take ibuprofen if you are over 55, pregnant, or nursing, or if you suffer from gastrointestinal problems, hypertension, heart problems, kidney problems, or blood clotting problems. Take acetaminophen instead. Ibuprofen must be taken with food.

For muscle pains, take acetaminophen (Tylenol™ or other) or ibuprofen (Advil™ or other) every four to six hours unless otherwise directed by your doctor, or the nursing personnel of your health center or nursing station.

For a sore throat, gargle with salt water: 2.5 ml (1/2 level teaspoon) of salt in 240 ml (1 cup) warm water (do not swallow). Hard candy or throat lozenges, preferably sugar-free, can also provide relief.



Caring for sick children

Consult a doctor or the nursing personnel of your health center or nursing station

- If your child is under 2 years old and has a temperature of more than 38°C (100,4°F).
- If your child is a carrier of a chronic illness or is immune-suppressed and has a temperature of more than 38°C (100,4°F).
- If your child seems very sick or lethargic, or if you have trouble waking him or her up.

Give appropriate medication

If your child is more than 3 months old and has a temperature of more than 38°C (100,4°F), you can give acetaminophen (Tylenol™, Tempra™, or other), according to the directions on the package and your child's weight.

Warning:

- Always measure your child's temperature using a thermometer, preferably a rectal thermometer. If you use an oral thermometer, wait 30 minutes after he or she eats or drinks something cold or hot before taking his or her temperature.
- Do not rub your child with alcohol to reduce fever. The alcohol can be absorbed through the skin or lungs, causing poisoning.
- Do not give ibuprofen (Advil™ or other) to children under six months old.
- Do not give acetylsalicylic acid (Aspirin™ or other) to a child under 18 years of age. At this age, aspirin combined with Influenza can cause a severe disease called Reye's syndrome, which attacks the liver and nervous system.



Keep the child comfortable

Make sure that your child:

- wears light clothing;
- gets plenty of rest;
- drinks enough fluids and does not show signs of dehydration, especially if he or she is vomiting or has diarrhea.

Watch for these signs of dehydration:

- six hours without urinating in babies, or more than eight hours without urinating in older children;
- hollows at the fontanelles (the soft spots on the top of a baby's head);
- cold skin that does not snap back into place when pinched;
- irritability, drowsiness.

If your child shows signs of dehydration, give acetaminophen instead of ibuprofen to relieve fever. If needed, you can give rehydration solutions (e.g. Pedialyte™), sold in pharmacies, or available at your community's health center or nursing station.

Keep the temperature of your child's room at around 20°C (68°F).

If your child is sick, do not send him or her to daycare, kindergarten or school, and do not allow him or her to take part in group activities.

Hygiene and prevention measures

Hand-washing



WET HANDS

1



APPLY SOAP

2



RUB
for 15 to 20 seconds

3



SCRUB
nails

4



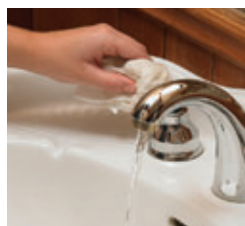
RINCE

5



DRY

6



TURN OFF
the tap using
paper towel

7

Wash your hands often

Wash your hands often, especially:

- when they are visibly soiled;
- after sneezing or coughing;
- after blowing your nose;
- after using the washroom;
- after changing a baby's diaper;
- before preparing, handling, or serving food;
- before eating;
- before putting on or taking off contact lenses;
- after handling garbage.

Wash your hands with ordinary soap and water; antibacterial soap is not necessary.

If soap and water are not available, you can use alcohol-based antiseptic gels, foams, or liquids. These should be at least 60% alcohol.

Take a little antiseptic gel, foam, or liquid. Rub your palms, your fingertips, the backs of your hands, and between your fingers. Keep rubbing until your hands are dry; do not use a paper towel.

Warning

Antiseptic products must be kept out of the reach of young children. Children should use them only occasionally and should be supervised while using them.

Always keep your hands away from your eyes, your nose, and your mouth.

Respiratory hygiene

Avoid infecting others when you cough or sneeze



COVER
your mouth and nose
with a tissue when
you sneeze or cough.



THROW
soiled tissues in
the garbage.



If you do not have
a tissue, cough or
sneeze into your
elbow or upper arm.



**WASH hands
often.**
Use an antiseptic
product if there is
no soap and water.

Using a face mask

If you have a fever and cough, wear a mask when you are:

- with other people;
- in any care facility, such as an emergency room or a clinic waiting room;
- in a public place;
- with a sick person who is not wearing a mask (e.g. a young child).

Dispose of your used mask in a garbage can lined with a garbage bag. Keep it closed or out of reach of children.

Wash your hands after removing your mask.

Use masks that are available in pharmacies and other stores.

You can also use a cloth (e.g. cotton) scarf. Wash the scarf every day.



PLACE
the mask over your
mouth and nose with
the flexible nosepiece
upwards.



PULL
the bottom of the
mask under your chin.



SHAPE
the flexible nosepiece
to the bridge of your
nose.



CHANGE
your mask if it
becomes damp.

Decision Chart

If you have flu symptoms

Use the guidelines in this table to help make the best decision for you and your loved ones. Always use hygiene and prevention measures to avoid contamination:

- Wash your hands frequently.
- Cough or sneeze into the crook of your elbow rather than into your hands.
- Keep your surroundings clean.

SITUATION FOR AN ADULT OR CHILD

The person does not have a fever (temperature less than 38°C or 100,4°F), but does have these symptoms:



Sore throat



Stuffy nose



Runny nose



Cough

DECISION

Probably a cold.
Rest at home.

SITUATION FOR AN ADULT OR CHILD

The person has a fever over 38°C (100,4°F). The fever came on suddenly and is accompanied by these symptoms:



Cough



Sore throat



Headache



Significant fatigue



Muscle aches

DECISION

Probably the flu.
Rest at home.

Refer to the
Self-care guide.

Call Info-Santé 8-1-1
if needed.

SITUATION FOR AN ADULT OR CHILD AT RISK OF COMPLICATIONS

The person has a fever over 38°C (100,4°F) and belongs to a group at risk of developing complications (children under 2 years of age, seniors, pregnant women, and individuals with chronic diseases).

SITUATION FOR AN ADULT OR CHILD

The person has a fever and one of these symptoms:



Shortness
of breath



Difficulty
breathing



Painful breathing



Vomiting
for more than
four hours



Fever in a child who
is too quiet and less
active than normal,
who refuses to play
or is agitated

DECISION

See a doctor today.

SITUATION FOR AN ADULT OR CHILD

The person has a fever over 38°C (100,4°F) and one of the following:



Difficulty breathing
that persists or
worsens



Blue lips



Difficulty moving



Severe neck
stiffness



Drowsiness, confusion,
disorientation, or difficulty
being roused



Convulsions



No urination
for 12 hours



Fever in an infant
under 3 months old

DECISION

**Go to the emergency
room immediately.**
Call 9-1-1, if necessary.



Key phone numbers

General Information

Services Québec
(Centre de relations avec la clientèle)

Québec Region
418 644-4545

Montréal Region
514 644-4545

Elsewhere in Québec
1 877 644-4545 (toll-free)

**For people who are deaf
or hearing impaired:**
1 800 361-9596 (toll-free)

**Or contact your health center
or nursing station.**

Health-related Questions

Info-Santé 8-1-1

www.guidesante.gouv.qc.ca

www.msss.gouv.qc.ca

Stay informed. Visit
www.pandemiequebec.gouv.qc.ca
for up-to-date information.



Santé
et Services sociaux
Québec 

Une version française de ce document est disponible au :

www.pandemiequebec.gouv.qc.ca

www.cssspnql.com

ou en téléphonant aux numéros sans frais de Services Québec :

418 644-4545 (Région de Québec),

514 644-4545 (Région de Montréal),

ou 1 877 644-4545 (Ailleurs au Québec).



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