

Influenza 101

(aka “flu” including H1N1)

What are the symptoms of flu?

- Symptoms include sudden onset of:
 - fever/chills
 - cough
 - muscle aches
 - sore throat
- These may be followed by runny nose, loss of appetite, extreme tiredness and headache
- May occasionally be followed by nausea, vomiting and/or diarrhea

When do you need to see a doctor?

Most people recover without needing to see a doctor; the flu usually lasts 7 - 10 days and goes away with self-care. Some of the minor symptoms (eg. fatigue) may continue a few weeks. However, you need to see a doctor if you experience any of the following:

- Difficulty breathing doing ordinary things
- Show **no** improvement by the end of one week (you will not be back to normal)
- Persistent fever lasting 5 or more days (measured with a thermometer; 37.0 Celsius is normal)
- Coughing up blood
- Disorientation or confusion
- Pain or pressure in chest
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Flu-like symptoms that improve but then return with fever and worse cough

Those in high risk groups including pregnant women, those with chronic illnesses such as diabetes, asthma etc. **, and children under 5, should receive medical care within 48 hours of the onset of symptoms whenever possible.

Do not go to a doctor for a medical note, it is unnecessary and will not be provided in most circumstances.

Where to go for medical care - IF you need it (described above)

- Queen’s Health, Counselling and Disability Services
 - Mon & Wed: 9 - 4:30
 - Tues & Thur: 9 - 7:30
 - Friday: 9 - 12 and 1 - 3By appointment or walk-in during above hours
- Hotel Dieu Hospital - Urgent Care Clinic - Daily: 8am - 10pm
- Kingston General Hospital - Emergency Department - Daily, 24 hrs

How is flu spread?

- Person to person - by being coughed or sneezed on by people who have the flu or sharing drinks or food with someone who has the flu
- Touching surfaces contaminated by the virus (eg. door handles, computers, towels, etc.) THEN touching your mouth, nose or eyes; the flu virus can live for about 48 hours on surfaces outside the body

When is someone with flu contagious?

People can spread the virus from one day before getting sick to 5 - 7 days after. People with flu should stay home during this period except for absolute necessities e.g. needing medical attention (as above), or food.

Prevention: How to avoid getting the flu

- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or clean hands with hand sanitizer (alcohol based) when unable to wash with soap and water
- Get an annual flu shot - campus clinics are held each fall (H1N1 vaccine is coming, check website for info)
- Cough or sneeze into your sleeve or a tissue (not your hand), and throw the tissue in the garbage after using it
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth; germs are spread this way
- Practice social distancing: try to avoid close contact with people who are sick (stay at least 6 ft away)

Self care for the flu

- Stay home and limit contact with others until coughing and/or sneezing subside (usually about 1 week)
- Call TeleHealth Ontario 1-866-797-0000 and follow their advice (TTY 1-866-797-0007)
- Get adequate sleep daily, 8-10 hours, and lots of rest
- Drink plenty of water/juice
- Avoid alcohol, it impairs your body's ability to fight the virus
- Take acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Advil) for fever, muscle aches and headaches if you have no problems with these drugs. These medications will help you feel better, they will not make the flu go away. A pharmacist may suggest other things to help with the symptoms
- Wearing regular masks is not useful for preventing spread of flu virus.

**** Groups at high risk of complications**

People with any of the following underlying conditions, may be at higher risk of experiencing complications if they get the flu. Note that this is not a complete list. People with any chronic medical condition should contact TeleHealth Ontario to see if they are at increased risk.

- Lung disease such as asthma
- Diabetes
- Cancer
- Conditions which suppress the immune system
- Heart disease
- Kidney disease
- Neurological conditions such as MS, CP, seizure disorders, or myelitis
- Sickle Cell anemia
- Stomach or bowel conditions e.g. crohns or ulcerative colitis
- Pregnancy

For more information on the flu including H1N1, check these links:

[Queen's H1N1 Pandemic Preparedness](#)

[KFL&A Public Health Unit H1N1 Influenza Update](#)

[Public Health Agency of Canada](#)

[FightFlu.ca](#)

[CDC H1N1 Flu and You](#)