

The flu an infection to be taken seriously

The flu is a very contagious infection of the respiratory tract. It can cause a high fever, cough, muscle aches and intense fatigue, and prevent you from going about your daily activities for a few days.

People at risk for complications

During the annual flu season, some groups of people are at higher risk for complications because of their age or state of health. These groups include:

- people with chronic diseases;
- very young children (under two years of age);
- elderly people;
- pregnant women.

If they have flu symptoms, these people must see a physician in order to receive early antiviral treatment.

The seasonal flu vaccine does not specifically protect against influenza A(H1N1). **A vaccine against the new influenza A(H1N1) virus** is now being produced and it will be offered to the public. At that time, instructions from the public health authorities concerning the vaccination would be disseminated through the newspapers, radio, television and the Internet (www.pandemiequebec.gouv.qc.ca).

How the virus spreads

Influenza virus spreads very easily through droplets from the nose and mouth of an infected person. You can catch the flu if you come in contact with a contaminated surface or an infected person and you then touch your nose, mouth or eyes. Symptoms develop one to seven days after infection. A person who has the virus is contagious for 24 hours before and up to 7 days after the onset of symptoms. Contagion is, however, greater on the first 3 to 4 days after symptoms begin.

The flu virus thrives in cool, dry environments. The virus sometimes spreads when there is contact, such as among people living in the same household, when taking care of someone who is sick, or being in places where people are in contact, for instance, on public transport, at entertainment or sports facilities, or at other public gatherings.



Prevention and protection

Always apply the following instructions to avoid spreading viruses.

Wash your hands often

Washing your hands often is a good way to prevent the flu. The people living with you or providing you care must also wash their hands. Teach children the proper way to wash their hands and encourage them to do it often.

Wash your hands with ordinary soap and water; antibacterial soap is not necessary. If there is no soap or running water, alcohol-based gels, foams or antiseptic liquids can be used. These products should contain at least 60% alcohol.



1 Wet your hands with lukewarm water.



2 Apply soap.



3 Rub your hands together for 15 to 20 seconds. It is important to thoroughly wash all surfaces of both hands: your fingers, between your fingers, your thumbs, your palms, the back of your hands, and your nails.



4 Rinse your hands under running water.



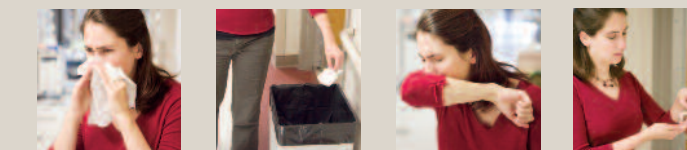
5 Dry your hands with a paper towel, a clean cloth towel, or a hand dryer.



6 Turn off the tap with the paper towel, if available.

Cough and sneeze without contaminating

When you cough or sneeze, cover your nose and mouth, ideally with a tissue. Wash your hands afterward. If you have no tissue, cough or sneeze into the bend of your elbow or into your upper arm; these parts of the arm seldom come into contact with people or objects.



Clean your environment

In general, the flu virus can live up to 5 minutes on the hands, 8 to 12 hours on cloth, paper or tissue, and 24 to 48 hours on hard surfaces such as a phone, a door-knob, dishes or a stair railing. Therefore it is important to thoroughly clean all surfaces that are frequently touched, especially in the kitchen and bathroom; these rooms are more likely to be contaminated and transmit infections. Use soap and water or household detergents.

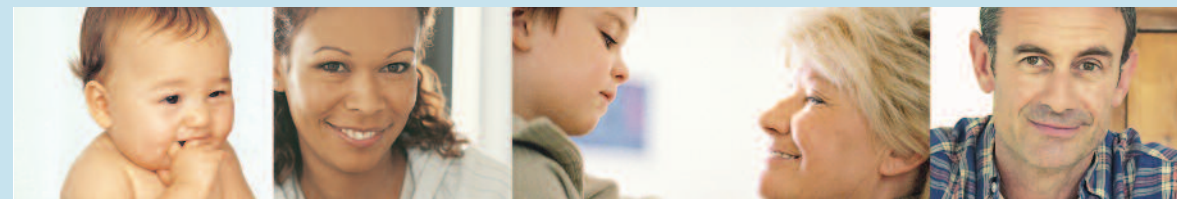
If you are ill, your bedding, towels, clothing and dishes can be washed with regular soap, along with those of other people in the household. However, it is preferable to wash them in hot water.

Precautions and care if you have flu symptoms

If you have flu symptoms, you can call Info-Santé 8-1-1 or a doctor depending on the seriousness of the symptoms. To avoid contamination, it is important to follow the instructions you will be given.

Flu symptoms*	
Fever	Usual Between 38°C and 40°C (100,4 °F and 104 °F) Sudden onset Lasts two to five days
Cough	Usual Lasts about a week
Headache	Usual and sometimes intense
Achiness and stiffness	Usual and sometimes intense
Intense fatigue	A few days Sometimes longer
Nausea and vomiting	Usual, especially in children under six years old
Nasal congestion and runny nose	Rare
Sneezing	Rare
Sore throat	Rare
Chest pain	Usual and sometimes intense

* A cold is a more benign infection of the respiratory tract that is often confused with the flu. To properly distinguish between the two, consult the table of symptoms at the following address: www.msss.gouv.qc.ca/influenza.



Rest and limit contact with other people

Rest at home. **Limit your contact** with others until your symptoms end. Limit visits by family and friends as much as possible. Avoid sharing personal items (towels, utensils, glasses and so on). Keep a reasonable distance from the people around you. Limit your travel and avoid crowds as much as possible.

Use medications properly

If there are no complications or risk factors (a chronic disease, for example), the flu does not need to be treated with medications. However, over-the-counter medications can be used to relieve symptoms. Before using them, read the labels carefully and only take the recommended doses.

Depending on their evaluation of your condition, a health care professional may give you **antiviral** medications. These drugs can help reduce the duration and severity of the symptoms. Take the prescribed medications as recommended.

Contact your pharmacist about any problems you may have while taking it.

Wear a surgical mask to protect others

Surgical masks help stop infectious droplets from spreading when a sick person coughs or sneezes. Therefore it is best to wear a mask if you have a fever and cough and you are in the presence of other people.

Don't be afraid to ask for help

The current situation can cause stress and anxiety in the population. Emotions, behaviours and social consequences will vary depending on the evolution of the new influenza A(H1N1) virus. Most individuals have the resources to deal with these situations. However, some people need to be informed or reassured about events or their health.

If you are concerned and need to be reassured, do not hesitate to ask for or accept help. Talk to your family to find one or more persons you can count on to take over if required. Call the health and social services centre in your locality if you do not know anyone who can help you.

You can also obtain information by calling **Info-Santé 8-1-1** or the *Centre de relations avec la clientèle* of *Services Québec* at **1 877 644-4545**.

Stay informed

For up-to-date information on the influenza A(H1N1) virus circulating in Québec, listen to the radio, watch television, read the newspapers and visit the government Website at www.pandemiequebec.gouv.qc.ca.

In all cases, follow the advice and instructions given by public health authorities, which may change as the situation develops.

Consult a health care professional

Call Info-Santé 8-1-1 or consult a doctor if you believe your child has influenza A(H1N1) virus and he or she:

- is under two years of age and has a temperature above 38°C (100.4°F);
- has a chronic illness or is immunodeficient, and has a temperature above 38°C (100.4°F);
- seems very sick and lacks energy, and you trouble difficulty waking him or her up.

Give the appropriate medication

- If your child is over three months old and has a temperature above 38°C, you can give the child acetaminophen (Tylenol™, Tempra™, etc.), according to the manufacturer's instructions and the child's weight.
- Do not give ibuprofen (Advil™, etc.) to a child under six months old.



Contact with a person who has the flu

If you have been in contact with someone who has the flu and you develop symptoms of influenza, such as fever or cough, follow the advice in this pamphlet.

- Do not give acetylsalicylic acid (Aspirin™, etc.) to a child or young person under 18 years old. At that age, this type of medication combined with the flu can cause a serious disease called *Reyes' Syndrome*, which attacks the liver and the nervous system.

See that the child is comfortable

Be sure that:

- the child wears light clothing;
- rests;
- drinks enough and does not have signs of dehydration, particularly if the child is vomiting or has diarrhea.

Follow recommendations

If your child is ill and is of pre-school or school age, it is recommended that the child not be sent to day-care, kindergarten or school until he or she no longer has symptoms.

General Information

Questions about health

For any question about your health or the health of your family, call **Info-Santé 8-1-1**. Nurses are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to answer your questions.

For any other question

Call the *Centre de relations avec la clientèle* of *Services Québec* at **1 877 644-4545** (toll free).

Québec City area: 418 644-4545
Montréal area: 514 644-4545

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

Visit the Website www.pandemiequebec.gouv.qc.ca regularly to keep abreast of the situation.

Influenza A(H1N1)



What you need to know

What you need to do

*Protecting yourself,
protecting others*