



Collingwood General & Marine Hospital
459 Hume Street
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(705) 445-2550
www.cgmh.on.ca

What to do if I have the flu

How to care for adults with influenza

General self-care tips

- Get plenty of rest
- Eat healthy foods
- Avoid contact with others while contagious (for at least seven days) if possible
- Drink extra fluids;
- Gargle with warm salt water. Mix together:
 - One teaspoon (5 ml) of salt
 - One teaspoon (5 ml) of baking soda
 - Two cups (500 ml) of water
- Use throat lozenges
- Use saline nose drops or sprays
- Don't smoke. Avoid second hand smoke
- Talk to others if you are concerned that you are sick with influenza and ask for help if needed.

How to care for children with influenza

Symptoms to look for in children

- Influenza can be more severe in children younger than five years of age and especially for those younger than two years of age.
- Children with influenza may have the same symptoms as adults, but there are some differences in babies and toddlers. For example:
 - A fever may be the only symptom of influenza in babies;
 - Some babies may not be able to drink fluids or breast feed;
 - Seizures or stiff neck may appear in some babies. Young children may also have headache, vomiting, irritability and sensitive eyes;
 - Toddlers and babies usually have higher temperatures, often over 39.5C (103.1F);
 - About half of the children three years of age or younger have symptoms such as nausea, vomiting, diarrhea and stomach pain;
 - Influenza viruses may cause croup, pneumonia or bronchitis in young children;



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- Ear infections and red, sore eyes are more frequent in young children. Sore muscles are also common.

Note: Toddlers and babies may be irritable, eat poorly, have a hoarse cry and a barking cough.

Children older than five years of age and adolescents usually have the same symptoms as adults.

How to care for a child with influenza

For fever and muscle aches:

- Take the child's temperature first;
- Use acetaminophen according to instructions on label or advice from a health care provider;
Ibuprofen is another option, but it should **not** be used for babies younger than six months of age;
- Do not wake the child to give the medication.

Note: Children younger than 18 years of age should **NOT** take acetylsalicylic acid (ASA) or any products containing ASA. Combined with influenza, ASA may cause Reye's syndrome, a very serious condition affecting the nervous system and liver.

- Dress the child in lightweight clothing and keep room temperature at 20C (68F);
- Offer water or juice or breast feed infants often while the child is awake;
- Do not use cool baths or alcohol rubs;
- Encourage the child to rest or involve them in quiet activities for approximately five days;
- Try saline nose drops for stuffy nose or cough;
- Elevate the head of the bed; babies may be more comfortable in a car seat or a baby swing;



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Over-the-counter (non-prescription) medications

Before using a product you should know:

- How to use it (e.g., how much to use and how often);
- How long to use it;
- The possible side effects; and
- When to seek medical attention.

Guidelines for over-the-counter medications (non-prescription)

General guidelines

- Follow the instructions on the label – Pay attention to when medication should not be used.
- To prevent adverse reactions or taking extra medication not required, use an over-the-counter product that contains the least number of active ingredients required to treat your symptoms.
- Try “regular strength” products before “extra strength” and only take the dose recommended.
- If you are taking more than one medication at a time, check the labels to avoid taking the same ingredient twice.
- Check the expiry date on medications in your home. Take outdated medications to a pharmacy for disposal.
- Keep all medications out of the reach of children.

Guidelines for adults

Muscle pain and fever

- Use acetaminophen (may be the best choice for some people) or ibuprofen. There are cautions with the use of both of these medications.
- Speak with a pharmacist or health care provider if you have any questions.

Note: Acetaminophen, when taken in high doses or with other medication or alcohol, may affect the liver or kidneys and ibuprofen may irritate the stomach and cause fluid (water) retention or affect the kidneys.



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Cough

- You may want to try a medication with dextromethorphan (DM) for a dry cough that prevents you from sleeping or causes chest discomfort.

Stuffy nose

- Try saline nose drops or sprays first.
- Medicated nose drops or sprays act quickly and may cause fewer side effects than medications taken by mouth. They should only be used for two or three days because with longer use, nose stuffiness (congestion) can actually get worse.
- You could try a decongestant by mouth if nose drops or sprays don't work. Decongestants may cause side effects like rapid heartbeat and sleeping problems and are unsafe for some people to take.
- Speak with a pharmacist or health care provider if you have questions and always read the label carefully before using any medicated product.

Sore throat

- If salt water gargles haven't worked, you may wish to try lozenges or throat sprays. Products with dyclonine will numb the throat while other products have a soothing effect.

Complementary medicines

- Some people may wish to try complementary therapies such as herbal and homeopathic products.
- It is important to find out as much as possible about the product you are thinking of taking as some complementary products should not be used in certain situations.
- Consult with your pharmacist or healthcare provider before taking these products.



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Guidelines for children

Children younger than six years of age

- Health Canada recommends that over-the-counter cough and cold medications **should not be used** in (given to) children younger than six years of age.
- These products have not been shown to reduce symptoms in children.
- There have been reports of overdose, misuse and rare side effects.
- Some of the serious side effects reported include such symptoms as convulsions, increased heart rate, decreased level of awareness, unusual heart rhythms and hallucinations.
- Do not use VapoRub-type products on children younger than two years of age.

Children six years of age and older

- Do not give children medications labeled only for use in adults and/or those that do not include instructions for children.
- Over-the-counter medications should only be considered if other measures have not worked.
Talk to your pharmacist or health care provider before using over-the-counter medications. They will help you to decide:
 - If an over-the-counter medication will lessen your child's symptoms;
 - If the medication is safe for your child to take.
- When using over-the-counter medications to treat children older than six years of age talk with your pharmacist or health care provider about:
 - How long the medication should be taken;
 - The dosage;
 - The possible side effects;
 - When the product should not be used.
- Follow all the instructions carefully including the dosing and length-of-use directions.
- Use the medication dosing device, if one is included with the product, to ensure accurate dosing.
- Do not give more than one kind of cough or cold medication to children.



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Note: Over-the-counter medications treat symptoms only, and are not a cure for the illness. Call Your Health Connection (705-721-7520 or 1-877-721-7520), TeleHealth (1-866-797-0000) or speak with your health care provider if you have questions.

Prescription medications

Antiviral medication for flu

- Can decrease the length and severity of the influenza illness;
- Must be started within 48 hours after the first symptoms appear in order to work;
- May be prescribed by physicians for treating influenza in people with severe illness or as prevention for those at risk of developing severe illness from influenza infection.

Antibiotic medication

- Not usually prescribed for influenza but your doctor may prescribe these medications for complications such as pneumonia caused by bacteria.

