
Taking Care of People with the Flu – October 2009

As the H1N1 (swine) flu is spreading, it's important to know what to do to protect yourself and others if you are taking care of someone who has the flu.

The American Red Cross has a set of tips for people who are caring for someone who has the flu. You should:

- Designate one adult as the main caregiver.
 - People at increased risk of severe illness from the flu should not be caregivers
- Try to have the person who is ill with the flu stay in a room separate from the common areas of the home and avoid contact with others as much as possible.
 - If someone with the flu is frequently in common areas with others, the sick person should consider wearing a facemask
- Make sure that person who is ill receives plenty of fluids and rest.
- Keep basic health care supplies on hand such as a thermometer, soap, disposable gloves, hand sanitizer, paper towels and tissues, facemasks, Acetaminophen and Ibuprofen, and cleaning supplies such as bleach and disinfecting wipes.
- Check with their healthcare provider about whether they should take antiviral medication, or if fever persists, whether antibiotics are needed.

To prevent the spread of the virus, wash your hands and cover your cough or sneeze.

- Disinfect surfaces that everyone touches.
 - Door knobs, switches, handles, toys, etc.
- Wash dishes and clothes with detergent and very hot water.
 - You can wash everyone's dishes and clothes together, but wash your hands after handling dirty laundry.

Caregivers should also remember to take care of themselves and their own needs to help their body resist infection.

- Practice healthy habits such as eating a balanced diet, drinking plenty of water and exercising regularly.
- Get enough sleep and rest.
- And try to manage stress by asking for help if you need it.

Stay informed about the flu by checking out flu.gov or redcross.org or by contacting your local health department.