

Protecting yourself and others

One of the most effective ways to protect you, your family and friends from influenza is to practise good personal hygiene.

Five simple ways to prevent the spread of pandemic influenza:

1. Cover your mouth and nose when you sneeze or cough

The flu virus can travel through the air when a person coughs or sneezes. When you cough or sneeze you should:

- Turn away from other people
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve
- Use disposable tissues rather than a handkerchief (which could store the virus)
- Put used tissues into the nearest bin, rather than a pocket or handbag
- Wash your hands, or use an alcohol hand rub, as soon as possible afterwards.

People who are sick should always be encouraged to wear a surgical mask to contain the virus and help prevent its spread.

2. Wash your hands

Washing your hands regularly with soap and water or using an alcohol-based product (gels, rinses, foams - available at supermarkets and pharmacies) that does not require water - even when they aren't visibly dirty - is effective in killing the flu virus.

Always wash your hands:

- after you've been to the toilet
- after coughing, sneezing or blowing your nose
- after being in contact with someone who has a cold or flu
- before touching your eyes, nose or mouth
- before preparing food and eating.

To wash your hands properly



1 Wet your hands, then apply soap



2 Lather vigorously for 15-20 seconds



3 Rinse with water



4 Dry your hands afterwards with a clean towel

3. Don't share personal items

The flu virus can spread when someone touches an object with the virus on it and then touches their eyes, nose or mouth.

If a member of your household has the flu:

- keep personal items, such as towels, bedding and toothbrushes separate
- do not share eating and drinking utensils, food or drinks.

In relation to sporting teams make sure that you do not share things such as towels etc. Most importantly, do not share water bottles and make sure hygiene is maintained with rub downs and first aid.

4. Clean surfaces

Flu viruses can live on surfaces for several hours. If a member of your household has the flu, you should regularly clean surfaces such as tables, benches, fridge doors and door knobs with soap and water or detergent.

5. Avoid close contact with others if you are unwell with flu

Keeping your distance from others by standing or sitting back (at least one metre apart, where possible) will help reduce the chances of spreading the flu virus between people.

While you are unwell you should remain at home and avoid going out in public. If you are unwell, you should not go to work or school or attend other public or crowded gatherings, and avoid taking public transport. If you need to use public transport, it is recommended that you wear a mask to contain the virus.

Do not visit people who have the flu unless it is absolutely necessary.

If a member of your household has the flu, he or she should be separated from other members of the family if possible, and be encouraged to wear a surgical mask. If you are caring for someone who has the flu, you too should wear a mask and gloves when in close contact to protect yourself from catching the flu.