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## Influenza Care For Adults

### How to care for adults with influenza

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#### General self-care tips

- 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. Mix well.
- Use throat lozenges.
- Use saline nose drops or sprays.
- Use a clean humidifier with the following conditions:
  - Always follow the manufacturer's directions for the use and proper care of your humidifier to reduce growth or spread of mold and bacteria that can grow in the water tank.
- Don't smoke. Avoid second hand smoke.
- Talk to others about concerns and ask for help if needed. Keeping in touch by phone or email can help with feelings of loneliness when sick.
- Eat healthy foods. [Find out more at HealthyU.](#)
- Get plenty of rest and sleep.



**Note:** If the above suggestions do not work, [review the guidelines for over-the-counter \(non-prescription\) medications.](#)

#### Over-the-counter medications

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Before using a product you should know:

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

**Note:** Over-the-counter medications treat symptoms only, and are not a cure for the illness. Call [Health Link Alberta](#) or speak with your health care provider if you have questions.

- [Read more guidelines on over-the-counter medications](#)

#### Prescription medications

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## Antiviral medication:

- Can decrease the length and severity of the 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:

- Is not usually prescribed for influenza but your doctor may prescribe these medications for complications such as pneumonia.

## When to seek medical care for adults

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**Seek medical care** if you or people in your care:

- Have heart or lung disease;
- Have any other chronic condition that requires regular medical attention;
- Have a weakened immune system;
- Are pregnant;
- Are frail;
- Are obese.

**Seek emergency medical care** if you, or someone in your care, have any of the following symptoms:

- Shortness of breath while resting or doing very little;
- Difficult or painful breathing;
- Coughing up bloody sputum (spit);
- Increased wheezing;
- Chest pain;
- Fever for three or four days without improvement;
- Feeling better then suddenly having a high fever or becoming ill again;
- Extreme drowsiness and difficulty awakening;
- Disorientation or confusion;
- Severe earache;
- Sudden inability to function in a normally independent, elderly person;
- Constant vomiting or diarrhea, especially in an elderly person or young child.