Caring for a Person with Flu

- Know the common symptoms of flu and when to seek care (see page 2).
- Have the sick person rest and lie down if running a fever.
- Allow the sick person to judge what bed covers are needed; when fever is high the person may feel very cold and want more blankets.
- Use fever reducers such as acetaminophen (e.g., Tylenol®) or ibuprofen (e.g., Advil® or Motrin®); follow the package label or your healthcare team’s direction to reduce fever, headache, and muscle, joint, or eye pain.
- Allow the sick person to drink as much as he or she can.
- Give light foods as the person wants; fluids are more important than food in the first days when the fever may be highest.
- Do not smoke around a sick person.
- Have the sick person gargle; use lozenges or hard candy for a sore throat.
- Clean your hands before and after caring for a sick person, and after coughing or sneezing. Wash your hands with soap and water or use hand sanitizers. Sick people should clean their hands too!
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth. Germs often spread this way.
- Consider wearing a mask when giving care to a sick person.

If You Have Common Flu Symptoms

- Stay home
- Rest
- Drink fluids
- Take medicines for fever such as acetaminophen (e.g., Tylenol®) or ibuprofen (e.g., Advil® or Motrin®)
- Call your healthcare team within 48 hours for advice about what to do next
  - Antiviral medicines may reduce flu symptoms if started within 48 hours of your first symptoms

Helpful Supplies

- Thermometer
- Fever reducers such as acetaminophen (e.g., Tylenol®) or ibuprofen (e.g., Advil® or Motrin®)
- Cough drops or cough syrup
- Drinks: water, fruit juices, soda, tea, or fluids with electrolytes (Gatorade® or Pedialyte®). Avoid caffeine
- Light foods: clear soups, crackers, applesauce
- Blankets or warm covers
- Face masks and disposable gloves

Stop the Spread of Flu

- Get a flu shot
- Stay home when sick
- Clean your hands
- Cover your coughs and sneezes

Everyone, including the sick person, should clean their hands often and cover their coughs and sneezes.

*Brand names included in this information are provided as examples only. Their inclusion does not mean that these products are endorsed by VA or any other Government agency. Also if a particular brand name is not mentioned, this does not mean or imply that the product is unsatisfactory.
When to Seek Medical Care

Call your healthcare team within 48 hours:

■ If you have common flu symptoms or
■ If you have moderate flu symptoms:
  ▶ Not able to drink enough fluids
    (Dark urine or feeling dizzy when standing are signs that you are not drinking enough fluids)
  ▶ Fever of 100° F or higher for 3 or more days
  ▶ Feel better, and then get a fever or sore throat again

Go right away for medical care:

■ If you have severe flu symptoms:
  ▶ Shortness of breath or wheezing
  ▶ Coughing up blood
  ▶ Pain or pressure in your chest when breathing
  ▶ Chest pain, especially if you have heart disease like angina or congestive heart failure
  ▶ Trouble with balance, walking or sitting up, or becoming confused

WARNING!

Moderate or Severe flu symptoms are signs of complications from flu!

Flu vs. Cold: Know the Difference

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symptoms</th>
<th>Flu</th>
<th>Cold</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fever</td>
<td>Usual - 100° F or higher</td>
<td>Rare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chills</td>
<td>Common</td>
<td>Uncommon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body or muscle aches</td>
<td>Common – can be severe</td>
<td>Uncommon or mild</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Headache</td>
<td>Common – can be severe</td>
<td>Uncommon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling tired and weak</td>
<td>Common – can be severe</td>
<td>Sometimes – usually mild: you don't feel tired</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cough</td>
<td>Common – can last 2-3 weeks</td>
<td>Common – mild to moderate hacking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sneezing</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Common</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Runny or stuffy nose</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Common</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sore throat</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Common</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chest discomfort</td>
<td>Common – can be severe</td>
<td>Sometimes – can be mild to moderate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

WHERE CAN I LEARN MORE?

www.publichealth.va.gov/flu
www.cdc.gov/flu
www.flu.gov

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www.publichealth.va.gov/InfectionDontPassItOn