

Care of a Child with Flu

There isn't much difference between caring for a child with the H1N1 flu versus one with the seasonal flu. The H1N1 flu is still a flu virus — so rest, relaxation, and drinking plenty of fluids should be at the top of the treatment list.

Younger children and those with chronic conditions are more at risk for problems. H1N1 flu passes easily from person-to-person. Most will get better on their own within a couple weeks. Keep the child as comfortable as possible while they are ill.

Should a child have flu-like symptoms, they should be kept out of school. Symptoms of the H1N1 flu are fever (100° F or 37.8° C or above) plus any one or more of the following: cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, chills, fatigue, diarrhea, vomiting.

Keep the child in residence or at home at the first sign of illness. To prevent the spread of the virus, the child should *only* leave the house for medical care or other necessities.

Having symptoms of the H1N1 flu or the seasonal flu is not a reason to go to the emergency room. If the child has flu-like symptoms, treat the symptoms. Give Advil or Tylenol for fever or aches, lots of fluids and rest. Cough medication as needed.

If the child develops medical distress, immediate medical care is needed. Watch for the following signs: rapid breathing or trouble breathing, bluish skin color, very sleepy or lethargic, has fever with a rash, has flu-like symptoms that improve, and then return with fever and a worse cough

Treating Symptoms

- Offer plenty of fluids (fever, which can be associated with the flu, can lead to dehydration). Offer water, sports drinks, juice, and soft drinks, ice pops, icy drinks, and flavored gelatin to maintain hydration.
- Encourage the child to rest in bed or on the couch, with a supply of magazines, books, quiet music, and perhaps a favorite movie.
- Give acetaminophen or ibuprofen for aches and pains. Dress the child in layers so they can be added and removed as needed.

If the child has a chronic condition, like asthma, you may need to check with his doctor to help ensure the condition is under control.

The child should see a doctor if he seems to get better, then feels worse, develops a high fever, has any trouble breathing, or seems confused.