

Caring For Pandemic Flu Patients

If your family member becomes ill, you should understand the progression of the disease.

Day 1- Day 2: Chills, weakness, lack of energy, loss of appetite, headache; back, arms, and legs ache, vomiting or diarrhea.

Day 2- Day 4: Chills, weakness, lack of energy, loss of appetite, headache, back, arms, leg aches begin to decrease and respiratory symptoms begin to increase. Symptoms similar to that of a cold, croup, or pneumonia may appear. Vomiting or diarrhea may continue but lessen. Patients may experience a sore throat, headache, and a dry hacking cough. Nasal discharge and sneezing are also common. Fever should disappear.

Day 4- Day 7: Symptoms should disappear. Coughs and a feeling of being continually tired may continue for a few weeks. A second wave of fever may occur. This is rare and means the steps will begin over again.

Patients should remain at home at least until all symptoms, except a dry cough, disappears.

If they have any one of the following symptoms, they should see a **physician** immediately:

- shortness of breath while resting or doing very little
- difficult or painful breathing
- coughing up bloody sputum
- wheezing
- chest pain
- fever for 3 to 4 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
- constant vomiting or diarrhea

If they have any of the following, they should go to the **hospital** immediately:

- Severe trouble breathing and it is not caused by a stuffy nose
- Has blue lips or hands, suddenly becomes pale, or has cold legs up to their knees
- Is limp or unable to move
- Is so sleepy they don't respond when you try to get them up
- Shows signs of a stiff neck, especially if they also have fever, are listless and their eyes are sensitive to light
- Is very confused
- Has a seizure
- Has worsening of chronic medical conditions (such as heart or lung disease or diabetes)

Rehydration solutions you can make from items in your pantry:

Orange Juice:

1 Cup orange juice + 3 Cups water + 1/2 tsp. salt

Apple Juice:

1 Cup apple juice + 3 Cups water + 1/2 tsp. salt

V-8 Vegetable Juice:

3 Cups juice + 2 Cups water **NO SALT** (This solution may be mistaken for blood in the stool.)

7 UP:

1 Cup 7 UP + 3 Cups water + 1/2 tsp. salt

Kool-Aid:

1/2 Cup sugar + 2 quarts water + 1 tsp. salt **OR** 1/4 Cup sugar + 1 quart water + 1/2 tsp. salt.

(Red Kool-Aid may be mistaken for blood in the stool.)

Gatorade is not a rehydration drink but may be made into one by:

2 Cups Gatorade + 2 Cups water + 1/2 tsp. salt. (Red Gatorade may also be mistaken for blood in the stool.)

Solutions which are **not recommended** for rehydration are: solutions combining water, sugar and salt, cola drinks, soft drinks, chicken broth, salt water and sugar water.

Diet Recommendations for Flu Patients:

Step 1: Clear liquid diet: rehydration solution, (see Meridian article: Caring for Family During a Pandemic - Part 1) water, fruit juice, Jell-O™, ginger ale, lemon lime soda, or tea.

Step 2: When a patient tolerates Step 1 well, gradually add: white toast (no butter or margarine), white rice, cream of wheat, soda crackers, or potatoes without the skin. You may also add small servings of banana or applesauce.

Step 3: After a day, add canned fruit and chicken noodle soup.

Step 4: Next add poached eggs and baked chicken breast without skin, canned fish or meat.

Step 5: Finally add milk and other dairy products, margarine or butter, raw fruits and vegetables and high-fiber whole grain products.