Welcome to residence at the University of Toronto. We’re delighted that you’ll be living in residence, and we wish you a happy, safe and comfortable school year.

As you’ve probably heard in the media, H1N1 influenza (also known as “swine flu”) is expected to recur in the coming flu season.

H1N1 flu is a respiratory illness caused by a new virus, which means we can’t be certain how it will behave. This type of flu will probably be with us for the next 18 to 24 months and it will likely come and go in a series of two or three waves.

To date, symptoms of H1N1 flu have been similar to the symptoms of seasonal flu: a temperature of more than 38°C, cough, sore throat, muscle aches/joint pain, fatigue, and in some cases nausea or diarrhea.

The challenge with H1N1 flu is not how sick it makes people, but how many people it makes sick. That means you may be aware of more people than usual coming down with flu symptoms in your classes and in residence. We’re all responsible for reducing the spread of the flu and protecting one another. Fortunately, there are some simple things we can all do to help reduce the risk of catching or spreading the flu:

- Wash and/or sanitize your hands often.
- Cough or sneeze into your sleeve or a tissue.
- Stay at home or in your residence room if you are not feeling well.

These things may seem elementary, but health authorities have assured the public that they’re very important – and very effective.

Please note: the University understands that you may be concerned about missing classes or assignments/tests. For the University’s guidelines on flu-related absences, please check [http://www.preparedness.utoronto.ca](http://www.preparedness.utoronto.ca).

We are all responsible for protecting ourselves and those around us: please read on to learn more about prevention and management of H1N1 flu in residence.
Be Prepared for the Flu

Consider taking the following steps now to be ready in case you come down with the flu. You’ll be more comfortable if you have supplies and some supportive friends to help.

Supplies:
As you’re getting ready to move into residence or when you’re shopping for other essentials, purchase the following items to keep on hand:
- Over-the-counter medication to reduce aches and fever (e.g., acetaminophen or ibuprofen)
- Cough medicine and throat lozenges
- Any prescription medicines you take
- A thermometer (non-mercury)
- Tissues
- Hand sanitizer (should contain at least 60% alcohol)
- Disinfecting wipes or cleaning products to clean your shared and personal space
- A water canteen or bottled water, and juice

Flu Buddies:
If you’re ill while in residence, inform your don, Dean of Students, and/or other residence staff. It’s also a good idea to identify, in advance, one or more “flu buddies”. These are friends who can help you by taking notes in classes, communicating with your professors, and/or checking in with you periodically to see if you need anything. Find your own set of flu buddies – and volunteer to be someone else’s buddy.

Important phone numbers:
Make sure you have your family doctor’s phone number.

Other useful numbers are TeleHealth Ontario – a 24-hour health advice line – 1-866-797-0000 or TTY 1-866-797-0007, and Toronto Health Connection (public health information and advice): 416-338-7600 or TTY 416-392-0658.

You should also have the number for Health Services on your campus:
- St. George campus: 416-978-8030
- University of Toronto Mississauga: 905-828-5255
- University of Toronto Scarborough: 416-287-7065
What to Do if You Have Flu Symptoms

If you’re ill while in residence, inform your don, Dean of Students, and/or other residence staff. (Your residence staff may give you specific instructions about whom to inform.)

If you have symptoms of the flu (remember, symptoms include some or all of: a temperature of more than 38°C, cough, sore throat, muscle aches/joint pain, fatigue, and in some cases nausea or diarrhea), we ask that you:

- Stay in your residence room
- Let your residence don or dean know that you’re ill

You can take over-the-counter pain reliever for fever and aches, and you should try to drink lots of water.

Call your Flu Buddies and ask them to help by taking class notes or talking to your professors. It’s not a good idea to have a lot of visitors, but you could ask a flu buddy to drop some supplies (food, drinks, etc.) at your residence room door.

If you are extremely ill, you should seek medical attention right away by calling either 911, your family doctor, TeleHealth Ontario, or Health Services on your campus (phone numbers on previous page). Signs of extreme illness include:

- feeling unwell for 3-4 days and not getting any better, or feeling worse
- a high temperature (above 38°C/101°F) that persists for more than 3 days
- difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- pain or pressure in the chest or stomach
- coughing bloody or green phlegm
- blue skin around the lips and/or blue skin on fingertips
- severe pain in the ear(s)
- severe vomiting, or inability to keep fluids down
- difficulty waking up or feeling disoriented or confused
- fits or uncontrolled shaking
- dizziness, fainting
- getting better for a few days and then taking a turn for the worse.

The H1N1 flu virus can be more serious for people with existing medical conditions. In very rare cases, the H1N1 flu virus can cause severe illness. If you have a preexisting condition or special risk factors, and you come down with symptoms of the flu, you should seek medical advice right away. Such conditions and risk factors include:

- a suppressed immune system
- pregnancy
- asthma
- diabetes
- heart disease
- kidney disease
- obesity
What to Expect in Residence if You Have Flu Symptoms

Most people with H1N1 flu are not seriously ill, but the illness is unpleasant and lasts about 5-7 days.

It’s also quite contagious, and most people have no immunity to it, so if you’re sick with flu symptoms, it’s important that you avoid contact with other people as much as possible.

Residence staff have been briefed on how to handle suspected cases of H1N1 flu, and they are used to assisting students who are ill. You should feel free to ask for their help and to ask questions or share your concerns. They can consult with others to provide the best advice.

Here’s what you can expect once you tell your residence staff that you have flu symptoms:

1. Your residence dean or don will suggest that you call a family member and remain in regular contact. They may also ask if it’s possible for you to go home to recuperate, if your family home is close by.

2. If you’ll be staying in residence for the duration of your illness, your dean or don will ask you to minimize contact with others to avoid spreading the flu. That may mean spending up to a week in your room – not attending classes, extra-curricular activities or other outside commitments – and wearing a surgical mask when you need to be in areas with other people. Please note: the University understands that you may be concerned about missing classes or assignments/tests. For the University’s guidelines on flu-related absences, please check the http://www.preparedness.utoronto.ca.

3. If you use a shared washroom, your dean or don may ask you to use a designated toilet stall, sink and shower.

4. If you use a dining room or cafeteria for meals, your dean or don can help make arrangements for someone to bring food and drink to your room, if your flu buddies are not available to help.
What to Expect if Your Roommate or Floormate Has Flu Symptoms

Flu viruses are spread when an infected person coughs or sneezes, producing droplets that carry the virus. Other people can become sick if the virus hits their nose, mouth, or eyes, or if they touch their nose, mouth or eyes after touching objects or surfaces that an ill person has coughed/sneezed on.

You can avoid contracting flu by:

- Washing or sanitizing your hands frequently
- Staying 2 metres away from someone who has the flu
- Not sharing common items (e.g., telephone, dishes, utensils, pens/pencils, computer keyboards, etc.)
- Cleaning shared high-touch surfaces frequently (e.g., doorknobs, light switches, faucets)

Depending on your residence’s facilities, if your roommate is sick with the flu, your residence staff may give you the option of sleeping in another room or in a converted common area. If that’s not possible, your dean or don will advise you to stay 2 metres away from your ill roommate and to wear a surgical mask when you are closer than that.

If you and your roommate share a multi-user washroom, your dean or don may arrange for different washroom arrangements – you may be asked to use another washroom, or an area of a shared washroom may be designated for the exclusive use of ill people.

Conclusion

The University is taking steps to minimize and contain the spread of infectious disease – you’ll see more hand sanitizing stations in residence and around campus, and you may notice more posters reminding you about flu prevention behaviours. If you are ill or someone you know in residence is ill, staff will be there to provide support.

Remember, you can protect yourself by keeping your hands clean and maintaining your overall health – eat well, exercise, get enough sleep.

And you can protect others by staying home or in your residence room when you’re ill.

The University is prepared to manage H1N1 flu on our campuses: for ongoing updates, please visit http://www.preparedness.utoronto.ca or the University homepage, http://www.utoronto.ca.