

Guidance for Roommates of Students with Influenza-Like Illness

If your roommate needs self-isolation because they have an **influenza-like-illness (ILI - defined as fever (temperature of 100°F [37.8°C] or greater) and a cough and/or a sore throat in the absence of a KNOWN cause other than influenza)**, they will need to either go home or stay in the dorm room until they no longer have a fever for at least 24 hours without using fever-reducing medications. Experience shows that most people with the 2009 H1N1 influenza virus who were not hospitalized had a fever that lasted 2 to 4 days; meaning an exclusion period of 3 to 5 days in most cases. Those with more severe illness are likely to have a fever for longer periods of time.

Influenza is easily spread¹, and [current CDC guidance](#) recommends that “*ill students limit their contact with others and, to the extent possible, maintain a distance of 6 feet from people with whom they share living space. If close contact cannot be avoided, the ill student should be asked to wear a surgical mask during the period of contact.*”

Since this will be a significant challenge for most roommates, finding an alternative place to stay is advisable, particularly if you have a condition that puts you at high-risk for complications from influenza².

Options for non-ill roommates/ housemates of students with influenza-like-illness include:

1. Stay with friends who are not sick (best option)
2. Stay in your room (last resort)
3. Request alternative accommodation through your Commons (this may not be possible due a shortage of open rooms, which are typically used to house students at high-risk of complications whenever possible)

Option 1: Stay with friends who are not sick for a few days as long as you are feeling well

Some strategies that students have used:

1. Sleeping on camping pads and sleeping bags while staying with friends.
2. Spending 1-2 nights at a friend's room, and then staying in a different friend's room for another night.
3. Staying in hotels when parents were visiting, or with other well students
4. Going home or on a road trip on weekends.

If you need to get things in your room, call in advance and ask your roommate to wear a facemask while you quickly retrieve the things you need. If a facemask is not available, ask your roommate to cover their cough or sneeze with a tissue. Avoid face-to-face contact whenever possible.

Option 2: Staying in your room

This is not ideal, and ***should not be used by students thought to be at high-risk for complications from influenza²***. Those students should contact their Commons. If this is your only option, then taking steps to prevent infection include:

1. Limiting your contact with the sick individual as much as possible
2. Maintaining a distance of 6 feet from the sick individual as much as possible
3. Asking the ill student should be asked to wear a surgical mask during the period of contact. – though this may not be tolerable to the sick student and may not be possible
4. Practicing good hand hygiene and cough etiquette and avoid rubbing your eyes or touching your face
5. Using disposable disinfectant wipes to regularly clean frequently used surfaces (see list below)
6. More information is available at: http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidance_homecare.htm

Option 3: Request alternative accommodation through your Commons

This may not be possible due a shortage of open rooms, which are typically used to house students at high-risk of complications whenever possible. During periods of increased numbers of sick students on campus, there may not be rooms available for all students, even those considered to be at high risk for complications.

Contact your Commons office if:

1. You are having difficulty finding a place to stay with friends
2. You have any conditions that would require special housing consideration, including conditions considered to put you at high-risk for complications from influenza².

You may have been exposed

Sick individuals may start shedding the flu virus 1 day before their symptoms started. This means that roommates may have been exposed unknowingly, but does not mean that roommates will become ill. The best thing to do is to avoid contact with sick individuals, monitor your own health, and start thinking about what you would do if you became ill. For a list of supplies most people will need, see: <http://www.middlebury.edu/NR/rdonlyres/BA61F792-505D-432C-9420-F8FEE8BF07C4/0/GetReadyforH1N1.pdf>

If you become ill

Even though your roommate is also sick, if you have influenza-like-illness you should self-isolate by either going home if possible or returning to your room. Follow instructions for self-isolation @ <http://www.middlebury.edu/NR/rdonlyres/4FC12719-106B-40DD-BEE3-3EA9358383C4/0/SelfCareStrategiesforSelfisolation.pdf>.

“What if I have been vaccinated?”

Health officials are recommending that most students get vaccinated for both seasonal flu and the 2009 H1N1 flu. [Vaccine shipments have been delayed](#), and the Health Center is trying to get vaccine.

The College Health Center will be holding vaccine clinics when vaccine is available. It is possible that self-isolation recommendations will change for vaccinated individuals who develop influenza-like-illness. The Health Center will update its recommendations once that guidance is available from the CDC and Vermont Department of Health.

Since it typically takes about 14 days for a person's immune system to build a response after vaccination, it seems prudent to avoid staying with sick roommates until 2 weeks after you receive vaccine. After two weeks from the date of your vaccination, staying in your own room may be a more practical option.

You can help your roommate:

- Help deliver meals
- Drop off any necessary supplies such as medications or fluids
- Call to see how they are doing and if they need anything

Going back to your room once your roommate is out of self-isolation

Once your roommate no longer has fevers x 24 hours without using fever reducing medications, the likelihood of transmitting flu virus decreases, and according to CDC guidance, self-isolation is no longer necessary.

Many people with influenza illness will continue shedding influenza virus 24 hours after their fevers go away, but at lower levels than during their fever. Shedding of influenza virus can be detected for 10 days or more in some cases. Therefore, people who have had influenza-like illness should continue to practice [good respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene](#) and avoid close contact with people they know to be at increased risk of influenza-related complications.

Studies have shown that influenza virus can survive on environmental surfaces and can infect a person for 2 to 8 hours after being deposited on the surface. Please work with your roommate to clean surfaces in your room with standard household disinfectants before returning. CDC guidance suggests:

1. Throw away tissues and other disposable items used by the sick person in the trash. Wash your hands after touching used tissues and similar waste.
2. Keep surfaces clean by wiping them down with a household disinfectant according to directions on the product label.
3. Linens, eating utensils, and dishes belonging to those who are sick do not need to be cleaned separately, but importantly these items should not be shared without washing thoroughly first.
4. Wash linens (such as bed sheets and towels) by using household laundry soap and tumble dry on a hot setting. Avoid “hugging” laundry prior to washing it to prevent contaminating yourself. Clean your hands with soap and water or alcohol-based hand rub right after handling dirty laundry.
5. Eating utensils should be washed either in a dishwasher or by hand with water and soap.

Custodial Services will try to help students with this process whenever possible. However, this may not always be possible depending on the number of cases on campus, and students may need to disinfect their room without a custodian's assistance, just like you would do at home.

Custodial Services suggests wiping down all hard surfaces that the ill person may have touched which might include:

1. Doors
2. Door Knobs
3. Windows
4. Sills/Ledges
5. Walls
6. Mirrors
7. Bed Frames/Mattresses
8. Desk
9. Desk Chair
10. Dressers
11. Ward Robe/Closet
12. Bookshelves
13. Telephone
14. Floor

Also, Students should consider cleaning personal items that might be shared, including:

1. Microwave
 2. Refrigerator
 3. Audio/Visual Equipment
 4. Key Board
 5. Hot Pot
 6. Dishes
- Influenza viruses typically spread from person to person when: 1) droplets from a cough or sneeze of an infected person are propelled through the air and deposited on the mouth or nose of people nearby, or 2) when a person touches respiratory droplets on another person or an object and then touches their own mouth or nose before washing their hands.
 - Students considered high-risk for complications from influenza:
 - a. Students who have chronic pulmonary, cardiovascular, hepatic, hematological, neurologic, neuromuscular, or metabolic disorders. This includes students with asthma;
 - b. Students who have immunosuppression (caused by medications or by HIV);
 - c. Pregnant women;
 - d. Students less than 18 years who are receiving long-term aspirin therapy and who might be at risk for experiencing Reye syndrome after influenza virus infection.