

Home-Based Care of Persons Ill with Influenza

Trainees: Community Responders and Representatives and other volunteers.

What does this training cover?

District- or provincial-level trainers will use this module to teach Community Responders about home-based care of persons ill with influenza. The Community Responders will use this information both in their own work and in the messages they pass to community members once a pandemic wave has arrived locally.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES: At the end of this session, trainees should be able to:

1. List the major symptoms and danger signs of influenza.
2. Understand the importance of keeping the ill separated from others.
3. Describe how to treat simple influenza at home, including fever and dehydration.
4. Explain when and where to seek care-giving support or medical care outside the home.

TRAINING METHODS: Interactive presentations, brainstorming, small group work, story.

Suggested time to conduct session: Between 1 hour and 45 minutes, and 2 hours and 30 minutes, if optional activities are included.

What needs to be locally adapted?

See the *Introduction & User Guide* for guidance on local adaptation.

- Go through the module and change terms such as “fever” and “urination” to commonly used local terms.
- **The educational handout** should be adapted for local use.

Address pandemic severity: Trainers and participants should consider how the information in this session would differ based on pandemic severity in the community. They should be as clear as possible, in advance, about where they will get guidance on decisions such as closing schools and supporting the neediest families with home health care, food, and other necessities. For more information on assessing pandemic severity, see the section Pandemic Severity in the *Introduction & User Guide* as well as WHO's *Considerations for Assessing the Severity of an Influenza Pandemic*, which can be found at www.who.int/wer/2009/wer8422/en/index.html.

Supplies and preparation needed:

- **Logistics:** Trainers need to make necessary logistical arrangements for the training, including any transport, venue, accommodation, and/or food requirements.
- *Chalkboard or flipchart*
- **Slides:** The boxed information in this module should be prepared in advance for presentation by projector or written on a flipchart before the training session.
- **Educational handout:** A summary of the important information in this module is included as a handout at the end.

OPENING

(5 minutes)

- **Welcome participants:** Set a friendly and personal tone.
- **Explain what to expect:** Tell participants what the topic and learning objectives are, and how long this session will be.
- **Encourage participation:** Remind participants about the group rules to ask questions and to be active. They will be learning more life saving information and need to understand it well.
- **Address basic needs:** Tell participants where the restroom is located, when breaks will be held, and other basic information.

REVIEW OF IMPORTANT INFORMATION ON PREVENTION, NEED FOR HOME CARE, AND INFECTION CONTROL

(30 minutes)

1. The Four Flu Fighters

Explain: that we have already learned, in the *Teaching Preventive Messages About Influenza* session, about the actions everyone in the community can, and should, take to prevent the spread of influenza.

Ask: What are the key actions everyone must use to prevent the spread of influenza? Make sure to complete the participants' list to include all Four Flu Fighters: or the **most important actions everyone should practice** to slow the spread of influenza.

THE FOUR FLU FIGHTERS

Wash hands often

Keep distance from others

Cover coughs and sneezes

Separate ill people from others

When a pandemic strikes, everyone needs to use the Four Flu Fighters all the time to slow down the spread of influenza. In this session, we will talk about caring for the ill, so that point is highlighted in the slide/flipchart.

The Flu Fighters will not stop the spread of influenza, but they can slow it down. This will save lives and reduce suffering because:

- Fewer people may get sick
- Fewer people will get sick at the same time if influenza spreads more slowly, which will lessen the huge load on health and other services, and
- We can get more time for communities to prepare—perhaps even for a vaccine or drugs to become available.

2. Need for home care during a pandemic

Explain: Still, experts tell us that influenza is likely to spread, no matter what, because it is a new virus, and no one will have protection against it for a while. So we need to do several things to fight influenza:

- Continue to practice the Four Flu Fighters, to slow down the spread of influenza.
- Be ready to take care of the sick in our homes.
- Be ready to help our neighbors and community.

During a pandemic, hospitals and clinics will be very full with critically ill patients. Most sick people can be cared for at home and only go to the hospital if they get much sicker or show danger signs that we will discuss later.

This session will give you the information you need to help families care for the sick at home and to decide when a person should go to the hospital. You have an important role to help often frightened and confused families manage a very stressful time.

3. Infection control for the caregiver

Refer participants to the session on *Infection Control for Community Responders*. They should be sure to share the information in that session with families they assist. Families should choose one caregiver to care for the sick person, to lower the risk of infection in the house. **Remind** them that **pregnant women are at high risk** during a pandemic, so they should not care for or go near the sick, if at all possible.

Briefly review key ways that the caregiver can protect him or herself.

- Practice the Four Flu Fighters.
- Wash hands often, and before and after caring for the sick.
- Make sure that the sick person covers coughs and sneezes, with tissues or a cloth.
- Put used tissues in a bag or waste container near the bed. Dispose of them with other household waste when the container is full, away from people. Or, if the patient uses a cloth for sneezes and coughs, make sure it is regularly washed and dried.
- It is more important for the sick person to wear a mask than the caregiver. If masks are not available, the patient should cover nose and mouth with a cloth when within 1-2 meters of others.
- Try to wear a mask, scarf, or other covering of nose and mouth if within 1-2 meters of a patient.
- Avoid touching the sick person, if not necessary.
- Keep the sick person's eating utensils, clothes, and other personal items separate. Clean them with soap or detergents before others in the household use them. Also use soap to clean house—hold surfaces touched by the ill or reached by their secretions.
- Avoid touching your own head, mouth, nose, or eyes (as this is how the virus enters the body).
- Take care of yourself: eat well, try to get rest, get help from others for other household duties.

SYMPTOMS OF INFLUENZA

(20 minutes)

Tell participants: It is important to know the symptoms (signs of an illness) of influenza so we can care for the sick. However, **people who do not look sick at all can pass the illness to others** when they sneeze and cough. This is why everyone should try to keep arms' length distance from everyone else, whether they look sick or well, and follow the other Flu-Fighter behaviors.

Brainstorm: Ask the participants to brainstorm the symptoms for influenza and write them on a chalkboard or flipchart. Correct any symptoms that are not related to influenza. Complete the list if the participants do not mention all of them.

Symptoms of influenza:

- Fever
- Cough
- Muscle aches and pains

- Tiredness
- Headache
- Sore throat
- Sneezing
- Runny or stuffy nose

Some people, especially children, may also have:

- Nausea or vomiting
- Abdominal cramps
- Diarrhea

While all of these symptoms **may** be seen when someone has pandemic influenza, it's important to know that most people will only have some—not all—of these symptoms. The two symptoms that will be seen most often with influenza are **fever and cough together**.

Ask participants how they can tell from these symptoms if someone has pandemic influenza, seasonal (or regular) influenza, or a really bad cold.

Answer: It is very difficult to tell the difference between these illnesses just from the sick person's symptoms. In fact, many illnesses have these general signs. This similarity can cause some confusion.

People should follow what local leaders say to do if a person becomes ill with these symptoms. In a severe pandemic that has reached the community and where many people are becoming ill, we can guess someone with these symptoms has pandemic influenza. We can also guess that hospitals and health staff will be too busy to help anyone who is not very, very sick.

We need to watch carefully for people showing these symptoms during a pandemic because:

- We want to try to separate the sick from the well and take care of them.
- People with a brand new illness, like pandemic influenza, have no protection against it and can get very sick very fast. This is especially true for children.

HOME CARE OF THE PERSON SICK WITH INFLUENZA

(1 hour)

Encourage the participants by showing them the following:

WE CAN DO IT!

The good news is that, although we may have to care for very sick people at home...

- The basic flu care steps are fairly simple to do and cost nothing.
- With the information in this session and a big enough heart, almost anyone can take care of someone sick with flu.
- Sick people may be more comfortable at home.
- Keeping sick people apart in the home will protect the family, the community, and help slow the spread of flu.

Show participants the chart of the Four Flu Fighters again. Why is one of our four most important ways to slow down influenza during a pandemic to “**Separate the ill** from others?”

Answer: to protect the household and community from getting influenza.

Ask: What are ways to separate the ill from others, including others in the family?

Write answers on chalkboard or flipchart. Fill in any that they do not mention.

- If you feel sick, stay home.
- If co-workers or friends feel sick, encourage them to go home.
- Keep children who feel sick home from school, child care, playing with others.
- Pick one person (not a pregnant woman) to take care of the sick person.
- Try to let only someone involved in direct patient care (i.e., one family caregiver, a health worker) visit the sick person.
- Try to keep the sick person in a separate room or space from the rest of the family.
- The sick person and caregiver should try not to go out in public. Send someone else out to do errands.

The caregiver needs to be sure the sick person gets:

- Bed rest (or a place to lie down comfortably)
- Fluids
- Medication for fever
- Food
- Fresh air in the sick room
- Clean, dry, and warm bedding and clothing
- Antibiotics, if told by a medical worker

It's not easy to do this for many days for a person who might be very sick, but the things to do are not so complicated. The caregiver should also watch out for three important things: high fever, dehydration (when the body does not have enough fluids), and danger signs. Let's look at these.

Treating fever

Fever is a sign that the body is fighting the infection. It will usually go away as the patient is getting better. Lowering fever will make sick people feel better and make it possible to care for them at home. To lower fever:

- Follow any available directions given by the authorities (radio, booklets, etc.) for treating fever during pandemic.
- Keep the patient in dry, clean, and loose clothes.
- If the person is chilled, cover with a blanket.
- If the person becomes very hot, loosen clothing.
- Give medicine such as ibuprofen, paracetamol, or acetaminophen. These medicines can be given every 6 hours to keep fever away.
- **Do not give aspirin to babies, children, or teenagers** because it can cause Reye's syndrome, a life-threatening illness.
- Sponging with lukewarm (wrist-temperature) water may lower the patient's temperature. Do not sponge with alcohol.

In areas where malaria from *P. falciparum* is present, all children under five years old with fever should be treated for malaria according to national protocols. Authorities expect that there will be over-treatment for malaria during an epidemic, and that this is acceptable. If rapid diagnostic tests are part of the national protocol and available, they can be helpful, particularly for adults.

Making sure the patient drinks enough¹

Show the participants the following slide/flipchart page:

Preventing or treating dehydration in people with flu may save more lives than any other home intervention during an influenza pandemic.

-Dr. G. Woodson, author of *Good Home Treatment of Influenza*

One of the most important things a caregiver can do is to **help the patient to drink plenty of fluids**. Try to pay attention to how much the patient urinates/pees. We want to be sure the patient urinates several times a day, and the urine/pee is not becoming darker. Offer something to drink often and leave liquids near the patient. If the patient is not urinating/peeing much, or the pee is getting darker, encourage him or her to drink more.

If the patient is very weak, the caregiver may have to offer small amounts of liquid, a spoonful at a time, as often as possible. This can be very time-consuming, but it is very important and could save the person's life.

Signs of dehydration

Dehydration is when the body loses too much liquid and starts to dry up. Dehydration, especially in children, can be very dangerous. There are ways to tell if the patient is becoming dehydrated.

- Patient is not urinating/peeing much, and the urine/pee is dark.
- Lightly pinch some skin on the belly of a child or the upper chest of an adult, then let go. If the person has enough fluid in him, the skin will flatten out again right away. If the person is dehydrated, the skin will stay stretched up in the shape of the pinch for a few seconds.

If the patient is very weak or shows signs of dehydration, give **oral rehydration solution** according to instructions on the packet, or clean drinks available in the home. Continue **breastfeeding** nursing infants.

Influenza danger signs²

Take the patient to the hospital if his or her condition gets a lot worse or if the person shows any of the danger signs. Pay attention to messages on the radio and television about using health services. As hospitals become full, messages may change about what people should do to care for the very sick.

Unless local leaders tell you different information, get medical help if the patient shows any of these signs:

- Suddenly becomes a lot sicker
- Very difficult breathing or shortness of breath
- Can not take fluids, has persistent vomiting, or shows signs of dehydration
- Lips or skin turning blue
- Confusion, such as not recognizing family or friends
- Convulsions (shaking the person can't control)
- Chest pain
- Coughing up blood
- Loss of consciousness (fainting, does not respond when called or lightly shaken)
- A sick infant younger than two months old or any infant who refuses to feed.

SMALL GROUP WORK: CARING FOR THE CAREGIVER

(30 minutes)

Optional activity, if time permits

Often when someone is sick in the home, family members take turns providing care and family, friends, or neighbors visit to make them feel better. To limit the spread of influenza from the sick person to others during a pandemic, it is important to **pick one person as the caregiver**. Often this is the mother of the family, who has many other responsibilities. Draw three columns on a blackboard or flipchart with these headings:

Problems caregiver faces	How visiting Responder can help	How others in the house can help
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Break the group into groups of 5-10 people to make a list of the kinds of problems the caregiver may face and then how a visiting Community Health Responder and the family can help with these problems. Have groups discuss for ten minutes. Have the groups come together to share their answers and discuss. The facilitator might add some of the possible answers below, as needed.

Possible answers: Problems caregiver faces	Possible answers: How visiting Responder can help	Possible answers: How others in the house can help
Fear of how to take care of very sick person	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Give encouragement and information ■ Emphasize watching for danger signs and the key tasks of keeping patient clean, dry, warm, and drinking enough fluids 	<p>Listen to the media and pass along announcements about care</p> <p>What else?</p>
Patient and household members want to see each other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Remind all of importance of keeping separate ■ Give family materials such as booklets or pictures to put outside patient's room to remind people to stay away 	<p>Think of ways household can stay in touch without being next to each other:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Send notes or drawings to the patient (but not from the patient, as these might be infected) ■ Pass messages with the caregiver ■ Sing a song to patient from outside the window <p>What else?</p>

Visitors come by to see the patient	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Remind all of importance of keeping separate ■ Give family materials such as booklets or pictures to put outside patient's room to remind people to stay away 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Thank visitors for coming ■ Remind them of public announcements of keeping distance ■ Tell them caregiver will pass messages to the patient What else?
Caregiver has many other household chores	Ask family who is doing the regular work of the caregiver and help them plan to help	Divide up the caregiver's other chores
Caregiver becomes sick	Be sure someone else in the family can now care for two (or more) sick people. If not, assist family to seek help from neighbors or community help groups	Pick another person to care for the sick in the household

WATCHING OUT FOR OUR NEIGHBORS

(10 minutes)

Optional activity, if time permits

Remind participants how important it is for all of us to watch out for our neighbors. In a pandemic, entire households can become very sick, leaving everyone in the house without any food or help. Read the true story from the 1918 influenza pandemic to show how being a good neighbor can save entire households of people.

The true story of Antonio Grillo, as told by his grandson³

Our family's farm was near a highway intersection in New Jersey, USA. In 1918, soldiers traveling home from the war would stop to ask for water.

A few days after some soldiers had stopped for water, the entire family got sick. Antonio thought the soldiers had made the water bad. The entire family was sick with high fever, vomiting, and diarrhea. The children were all in their parents' bed together, and everyone was so sick that no one was able to get out of bed for what seemed like days.

Down the road from their farm was a...couple. The man came to their house to check on them. He killed several chickens from their chicken coop, made chicken soup, and then spoonfed each one of the Grillos. This man helped my grandparents to the outhouse, cleaned them up, changed the bed sheets, cleaned the children, and put all the dirty sheets and clothing in a pile outside. Apparently this man did this at other homes as well because after they all recovered, other

neighbors said he had come to their home to check on them, too, and offered or gave them chicken soup.

The Grillo family survived the 1918 flu, thanks to the kindness of the neighbor whose name they didn't even know.

CLOSING

(5 minutes)

Answer any remaining questions. Thank participants for coming.

Annex 1: Handout

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT HOME CARE DURING AN INFLUENZA PANDEMIC

The Four Flu Fighters

1. Wash hands often
2. Cover coughs and sneezes
3. Keep distance from others
4. **Separate the ill from others**

Key ways that the caregiver can protect him or herself:

- Practice the Four Flu Fighters.
- Wash hands often, and before and after caring for the sick.
- Make sure that the sick person covers coughs and sneezes, with tissues or a cloth.
- Put used tissues in a bag or waste container near the bed. Dispose of them with other household waste when the container is full, away from people. Or, if the patient uses a cloth for sneezes and coughs, make sure it is regularly washed and dried.
- It is more important for the sick person to wear a mask than the caregiver. If masks are not available, the patient should cover nose and mouth with a cloth when within 1-2 meters of others.
- Try to wear a mask, scarf, or other covering of nose and mouth if within 1-2 meters of patient.
- Avoid touching the sick person, if not necessary.
- Keep the sick person's eating utensils, clothes, and other personal items separate. Clean them with soap or detergents before others in the household use them. Also clean household surfaces touched by the ill or reached by their secretions with soap.
- Avoid touching your own head, mouth, nose, or eyes (as this is how the virus enters the body).
- Take care of yourself: eat well, try to get rest, get help from others for other household duties.

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Symptoms of influenza

- Fever
- Cough
- Muscle aches and pains
- Tiredness
- Headache
- Sore throat
- Sneezing
- Runny or stuffy nose

Some people, especially children, may also have:

- Nausea or vomiting
- Abdominal cramps
- Diarrhea

While all of these symptoms **may** be seen when someone has pandemic flu, it's important to know that most people will only have some—not all—of these symptoms. The two symptoms that will be seen most often with flu are **fever and cough** together.

Ways to separate the ill from others, including others in the family:

- If you feel sick, stay home.
- If co-workers or friends feel sick, encourage them to go home.
- Keep children who feel sick home from school, child care, playing with others.
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- Try to keep the sick person in a separate room or space from the rest of the family.
- The sick person and caregiver should try not to go out in public. Send someone else out to do errands.

The caregiver needs to be sure the sick person gets:

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- Food
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- Clean, dry, and warm bedding and clothing
- Antibiotics, if told by a medical worker

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- If the person is chilled, cover with a blanket.
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- Give medicine such as ibuprofen, paracetamol, or acetaminophen. These medicines can be given every 6 hours to keep fever away.
- **Do not give aspirin to babies, children, or teenagers** because it can cause Reye's syndrome, a life-threatening illness.
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In areas where malaria from *P. falciparum* is present, all children under five years old with fever should be treated for malaria according to national protocols. Authorities expect that there will be over-treatment for malaria during an epidemic, and that this is acceptable. If rapid diagnostic tests are part of the national protocol and available they can be helpful, particularly for adults.⁴

Signs of dehydration

- Patient is not urinating/peeing much and the urine/pee is dark.
- Lightly pinch some skin on the belly of a child or the upper chest of an adult. If the person has enough fluid in him, the skin will flatten out again right away. If the person is dehydrated, the skin will stay stretched up in the shape of the pinch for a few seconds.

If the patient is very weak or shows signs of dehydration, give **oral rehydration solution** according to instructions on the packet, or clean drinks available in the home. Continue breastfeeding nursing infants.

Influenza danger signs⁵

Pay attention to the announcements of local leaders on the radio or television about when to seek medical care, as what hospitals can do may change in a severe pandemic. Unless local leaders tell you different information, seek medical care if the patient shows these signs:

- Suddenly becomes a lot sicker
- Very difficult breathing or shortness of breath
- Can not take fluids, has persistent vomiting, or shows signs of dehydration
- Lips or skin turning blue
- Confusion such as not recognizing family or friends
- Convulsions (shaking the person can't control)
- Chest pain
- Coughing up blood
- Loss of consciousness (fainting, does not respond when called or lightly shaken)
- A sick infant younger than two months old or any infant who refuses to feed.

REFERENCES

1. Grattan Woodson, MD, FACP. Excerpt from *The Bird Flu Manual*, BookSurge Publishing, Charleston, SC, reprinted with permission. www.birdflumanual.com or www.fluwikie.com/pmwiki.php?n=Consequences.PandemicPreparednessGuides#Woodson
2. WHO, Pandemic influenza prevention and mitigation in low resource communities http://www.who.int/csr/resources/publications/swineflu/PI_summary_low_resource_02_05_2009.pdf and Woodson.
3. Edited for length from: www.pandemicflu.gov/storybook/stories/will/will_grillo
4. For more information, see Prioritization of Health Services, available at: www.coregroup.org/H2P or www.pandemicpreparedness.org
5. For more information, see WHO, *Pandemic influenza prevention and mitigation* in low resource communities, available at: www.who.int/csr/resources/publications/swineflu/PI_summary_low_resource_02_05_2009.pdf. Also visit Grattan Woodson, MD, FACP. *The Bird Flu Manual*, BookSurge Publishing, Charleston, SC, www.birdflumanual.com or www.fluwikie.com/pmwiki.php?n=Consequences.PandemicPreparednessGuides#Woodson

