

Staying home when you are sick

If possible, staying home when you are sick helps prevent the spread of your illness to others. Avoid visiting people, particularly young children, people over 65 years of age, and those with a weakened immune system, as they are at greater risk of severe illness and even death from common viruses, such as influenza (“the flu”).

What should I do when I am sick and staying home to stop the spread of illness?

- Separate yourself from other people in your home; as much as possible, you should stay in a different room. Use a separate bathroom, if available. Shared rooms or living areas should be well ventilated (for example, keep window open if possible).
- If you need to attend a medical appointment and have a respiratory illness, wear a surgical mask and inform the office staff and all health care providers, that you are sick.
- Cover your coughs or sneezes with a tissue or your arm, not your hand; throw used tissues in a lined, covered trash can, and wash your hands with soap and water.
- Wash your hands often and thoroughly with soap and water; avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands. All other persons in your home should do this as well.
- Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available and if your hands are not visibly dirty.
- Commonly touched surfaces and items should be cleaned and disinfected frequently (e.g., at least once a day) to limit the potential spread of germs. Don't forget high touch areas like remote controls, phones, computer keypads, doorknobs, and light switches.



- Wiping down a countertop with soapy water will get rid of some germs but if someone has the flu or diarrhea or is throwing up, you want to kill (disinfect) the germs. Look for a cleaner that specifically says “disinfectant” and follow the directions for use or make one by mixing 10 mL of bleach with 1 litre of water (2 tsp of bleach with 4 cups of water).
- Avoid sharing household items; you should not share unwashed dishes, drinking glasses, cups, eating utensils, towels, bedding, or other items with other people in your home.
- Thoroughly wash all household items with soap and warm water after use.

How long should I stay home?

The length of self-isolation depends on the results of your laboratory tests and the period of time when you can spread the infectious disease to another person.

If you have any questions or wish to speak to a public health nurse, please do not hesitate to contact Ottawa Public Health at 613-580-6744 or visit [OttawaPublicHealth.ca](https://ottawapublichealth.ca)