

## FACT SHEET

# Dealing with stress or feelings of fear because of influenza<sup>1</sup>

Many of us are worried about influenza. There has been a lot in the news about a potential shortage of influenza vaccine, plus a lot of discussion in the media about the dangers of avian influenza.

### What can you do about it?

It is normal to feel anxious or worried about this disease. The best thing you can do is to take the advice of public health officials. See contact information on reverse side.

### Are you worrying too much?

You will know you are becoming too upset if you change your daily routine when there is no need to. Signs you are worrying too much might include:

- thinking about influenza a lot.
- change in sleeping habits, or not wanting to get out of bed.
- eating a lot more or a lot less.
- avoiding others.
- not wanting to leave the house.
- feeling cranky and irritable, losing your temper.
- feeling anxious or depressed.
- feeling panic or having panic attacks.
- crying.
- drinking more alcohol.
- taking more prescription drugs.
- having difficulty concentrating on tasks at hand.

### Talk about it

The first thing to do is talk about your feelings with someone you trust. This can be a family member, friend, religious leader, or teacher. Don't be shy. It helps to get it off your chest. You can support each other. Talk about it as often as needed.

If you notice the behaviour of a loved one, friend, or co-worker has changed, ask them how they are doing. Make time to talk. After you have talked, check in to see how they are doing. It shows you care and it can be a relief to both of you. Check in even if their behaviour has not changed. They may be upset, but hiding it well. If you or someone you love shows signs of too much worrying for more than a week or two, you should talk with a health-care professional. They will explain what is happening and help you find ways to cope better.

### INFLUENZA SELF-CARE



<sup>1</sup>Adaptation of the Mental Health Support Network of Canada "Dealing with the Stress or Fear You Might Feel Because of SARS".

## DEALING WITH STRESS OR FEELINGS OF FEAR BECAUSE OF INFLUENZA

### Influenza and your kids

The idea of a serious world-wide influenza epidemic (pandemic influenza) can be upsetting to children and teenagers. It's important to discuss this subject with them.

Reassure and let them know they can count on you and the adults around them. Provide facts. Give them a hug, too.

If you notice a behaviour change in your kids at home or school, discuss it with them. If it's related to fear of influenza, talk about it. Tell them the truth and reassure them. If this does not work, you may want to consider consulting a health-care professional, such as your family doctor, a nurse, psychologist or social worker.

### Some behaviour changes to look for include:

- change in sleeping patterns.
- being tired all the time.
- eating a lot more or a lot less.
- staying in their room.
- avoiding others.
- talking less.
- being cranky and irritable, arguing or fighting more with others.
- feeling sad or anxious.
- difficulty concentrating on tasks at hand, getting poor grades.

### Influenza and other traumatic events

People may feel more anxious about influenza because they are upset about other world events. This is not unusual. People who have recently experienced a sad or traumatic event may find influenza more upsetting. Traumatic events can include a car accident, the loss of a loved one, the loss of a job, or a serious health problem. It's normal to feel more stressed under these conditions.

If this happens to you, talk with a friend or loved one. If symptoms continue for over a week or two, you may want to talk with a health-care professional.

### For more information contact:

#### Health Link Alberta

Edmonton, call 408-LINK (5465)

Calgary, call 943-LINK (5465)

Outside Edmonton and Calgary local calling areas, call toll-free 1-866-408-LINK (5465)  
visit: [www.healthlinkalberta.ca](http://www.healthlinkalberta.ca)

#### Public Health Centres

(Monday - Friday, daytime hours), or  
physicians or pharmacists

#### Alberta Health and Wellness

visit: [www.health.gov.ab.ca](http://www.health.gov.ab.ca)

(Contact information)