



# Guide to Controlling Respiratory Illness in Dormitories and Other Group Housing Settings

1. **Separate ill persons from others.** Send persons with respiratory symptoms (sore throat, cough, etc.) and a fever (greater than 100° F or 37.8° C) to their home, dorm or living quarters at least until their fever has been gone for 24 hours. The fever must go away without taking a fever-reducing medication like acetaminophen (Tylenol®) or ibuprofen (Motrin®). They should stay isolated in a room during this time, at least 6 feet away from others. No visitors or group gatherings.
  - Instruct them to get plenty of rest and drink plenty of non-caffeinated and non-alcoholic fluids, such as water or Gatorade®. They should use other over-the-counter medicines to treat symptoms such as fever, pain or cough.
  - It is very important to follow the prevention items listed in #4 below.
  - Persons with worsening symptoms or who fit into one of the categories in the box to the right should contact their healthcare provider. If they do not have a healthcare provider, they should call an urgent care center.
  - Persons leaving their home or room to obtain healthcare should go directly there and ask to wear a mask as soon as they arrive at the healthcare establishment.
2. **Monitor other persons for new onsets of illness.** If possible, send people home who develop symptoms of respiratory illness. Otherwise, isolate the sick persons from others while they are sick.
3. **Keep a list of sick persons.** Epidemiologists call this a “line list”, and you can get one from your health department, or make your own. It should include the sick person’s name, age, location or room number, the date symptoms started, and whether healthcare attention was obtained. This will help quickly identify problem areas where extra actions may stop the illness from spreading.
4. **Re-educate everyone about preventing the spread of respiratory illnesses.**
  - i. Wash your hands: Cleaning your hands with soap and water or using alcohol-based hand gel often is the single most important action to prevent the spread of illness. For educational materials, visit <http://ads.health.ok.gov>.
  - ii. Avoid contaminating yourself with your hands: Don’t touch your eyes, nose or mouth unless you have just cleaned them and have not touched anything else.
  - iii. Cover your mouth when you cough or sneeze: This is important whether or not you are ill, since germs may be present even when there are no symptoms.
    - Use a tissue to cover the nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing, then dispose of it immediately and wash your hands.
    - Another safe way to cover your cough is to cover your nose and mouth with your sleeve, using the inside of your elbow. Germs are much less likely to be spread from your clothes than from your hands. When you cough or sneeze into your hands, you will spread germs every time that you touch something.
5. **Report unusually high numbers of respiratory illness for the setting** to the Oklahoma State Department of Health, Acute Disease Service at (405) 271-4060.

## **Persons at Higher Risk for Complications:**

- Children aged less than 5 years
- Adults aged over 65 years
- Persons aged under 19 years receiving long term aspirin therapy
- Pregnant and postpartum (less than 2 weeks after delivery) women
- Persons with asthma, chronic lung, heart, liver, kidney, blood, neurologic, neurodevelopment, endocrine, or metabolic disorders
- Persons with weakened immune system due to medication or disease
- Persons who are morbidly obese (BMI over 40)
- American Indians/Alaska Natives
- Residents of nursing homes and other chronic

*Thank you for your part in controlling the spread of disease in Oklahoma.*