

Swine Flu

Guidance to parents regarding swine flu

It is important to stress that swine flu is relatively mild in the overwhelming majority of cases.

However the most important advice to parents is that children who have symptoms of flu-like illness should stay away from school and as far as possible not mix with others until they have recovered and are free of symptoms. This is to avoid spreading the infection as much as possible.

Close contacts of infected children who **do not have** symptoms, including brothers and sisters, can still go to school as usual.

National Pandemic Flu Service

In most cases, if you think your child has swine flu you can contact the **National Pandemic Flu Service** on **0800 15 13 100** or log on to:

www.pandemicflu.direct.gov.uk

This service will help to check any symptoms and may suggest a course of anti-viral drug treatment. Anti-virals are designed to reduce the symptoms of swine flu and help a quicker recovery.

If you have been advised that your child needs anti-viral treatment, **please keep him/her off school and let the school know as soon as possible.**

Anti-viral medication is now being used for the *treatment* of people with symptoms of flu-like illness, and not to *prevent* the spread of infection. Therefore, anti-viral drugs are no longer being routinely given to children who are contacts of cases but otherwise well.

Should I contact my GP?

Certain groups of people are advised to contact their doctor if they think they have swine flu, rather than contacting the National Pandemic Flu Service. These are:

- Adults and children with serious underlying health conditions
- Pregnant women
- Children under one year of age
- Adults and children whose condition suddenly gets worse, or those whose condition is still getting worse after 5 days if a child; 7 days for an adults

Preventing the spread of swine flu

It's important to point out that most people who have swine flu make a quick recovery at home. However, you should do what you can to prevent the infection from being spread to others by ensuring your family take some simple precautions:

- Covering your nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing, using a tissue when possible.
- Disposing of dirty tissues promptly and carefully.
- Washing your hands frequently with soap and water to reduce the spread of the virus from your hands to your face or to other people.
- Cleaning hard surfaces (such as door handles) frequently using a normal cleaning product.
- Making sure your children follow this advice.

Vaccinations

The national swine flu vaccination programme is currently being launched and is initially targeted at high risk and priority groups.

The initial batches of vaccine are destined for frontline medical staff and patients in at-risk groups who are staying in hospital.

From next week, (October 26th) GP practices will begin to receive stocks of the vaccine: It is estimated that it will take around 3-4 weeks for all practices to receive

their first supplies, with further stocks of the vaccine to follow. GPs will be responsible for vaccinating patients in high priority groups and their practice staff.

Patients will be contacted by their GPs directly if they fall into the priority groups and told about arrangements for immunisations at their own GP practice, or within their home for the household.

Priority groups in priority order for the Swine Flu vaccination programme:

- Individuals aged six months to 65 years in the current clinical ‘**at-risk groups**’ (as listed below)
- Pregnant women
- Household contacts of immunocompromised individuals
- People aged 65 and over in the current clinical ‘**at-risk groups**’ (as listed below)

What are the ‘at-risk’ groups?

- Chronic respiratory disease, such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)
- Chronic heart disease, such as heart failure
- Chronic kidney disease, such as kidney failure
- Chronic liver disease, such as chronic hepatitis
- Chronic neurological disease, such as Parkinson's disease
- Diabetes requiring insulin or oral hypoglycaemic drugs, and
- Immunosuppression (a suppressed immune system), due to disease or treatment

Further information and advice on swine flu:

If you would like further general advice and information about swine flu you may find the following useful:

NHS Choices:

Log on to the NHS Choices which contains a large amount of up-to-date information:

<http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Pandemic-flu/Pages/QA.aspx>

Health Protection Agency:

Log on to the HPA website at <http://www.hpa.org.uk>, which includes advice for parents and carers of children:

http://www.hpa.org.uk/web/HPAweb&HPAwebStandard/HPAweb_C/1247816586

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Vaccination Information:

If you want further information on who will be offered swine flu vaccination, please visit the Department of Health website at:

<http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publichealth/Flu/Swineflu/InformationandGuidance/Vaccinationprogramme/index.htm>