

Health Office Fact Sheet



H1N1 (Swine Flu)

Swine flu is the common name given to a new strain of influenza (flu). The virus was first identified in Mexico in April 2009. It has since become a pandemic, which means it has spread around the globe. It has spread quickly because it is a new type of flu virus that few, if any, people have full resistance to. The swine flu virus is spread in exactly the same way as the ordinary cold and flu viruses. The virus is contained in the millions of tiny droplets that come out of the nose and mouth when someone coughs or sneezes.

People with swine flu typically have a fever or high temperature (over 38°C) and may also have aching muscles, sore throat and/or a dry cough. In other words, the symptoms are very similar to seasonal (regular) flu. Most people recover within a week, even without special treatment. It is important though that you know the symptoms of the disease so you can recognise it in yourself and others at an early stage.

If you, or your child/ member of your family has a fever or high temperature (over 38°C/100.4°F) and two or more of the following symptoms, you may have swine flu and should contact your doctor:

- unusual tiredness,
- headache,
- runny nose,
- sore throat,
- shortness of breath or cough,
- loss of appetite,
- aching muscles,
- diarrhoea or vomiting.

In the meantime the general advice is take paracetamol-based cold remedies to reduce fever and other symptoms, drink plenty of fluids and get lots of rest.

What to do if you think your child has swine flu

If your child shows any symptoms of swine flu please do not bring them into school. You are advised to contact your doctor for advice. If your child is treated for swine flu you must keep them away from school for **7 days** until they are no longer contagious. Ensure that your child drinks plenty of liquids, get lots of rest and give over-the-counter cold and flu remedies to help control their temperature. However, children under 16 **must not be given aspirin** or ready-made flu remedies containing aspirin. **Please ensure that you advise the school of your child's absence.**

Swine flu treatment

Swine flu can be treated with antiviral medicine which may be prescribed by your doctor. The drugs must be taken at or near the start of the illness to be effective.

Antivirals are not a cure, but they aid recovery by:

- relieving some of the symptoms,
- reducing the length of time of illness by around 1-2 days, and
- reducing the potential for serious complications, such as pneumonia

Who is at greatest risk of serious complications from swine flu?

Some people are more at risk of complications if they catch swine flu, and need to start taking antivirals as soon as it is confirmed that they have the illness. Doctors may advise some high-risk patients to take antivirals before they have symptoms, if someone close to them has swine flu.

Health Office Fact Sheet



H1N1 (Swine Flu)

People are particularly vulnerable if they have:

- chronic (long-term) lung disease,
- chronic heart disease,
- chronic kidney disease,
- chronic liver disease,
- chronic neurological disease (neurological disorders include motor neurone disease, multiple sclerosis and Parkinson's disease),
- immunosuppression (whether caused by disease or treatment), or
- diabetes mellitus.

Also at risk are:

- those who have had drug treatment for asthma in the past three years,
- pregnant women,
- people aged 65 and over, and
- children under five.

Should I or my child avoid contact with people suspected of having swine flu?

People with suspected swine flu will have been asked to stay at home and restrict their contact with people. Most people should continue their normal life, including going to school or work. This includes children who attend a school with a confirmed case of swine flu. There is no need to avoid contact with people who might simply have come into contact with those with the illness, such as the parents of children at schools with a confirmed case but who are not themselves ill.

It can take up to seven days (normally two to five days) after infection for swine flu symptoms to develop. If you develop symptoms, stay at home and follow the general advice .

Further advice

If your child appears unwell in any way in the morning before school please do not send them in to school. If your child requires Calpol in the morning before school for any reason please keep them at home.

- If your child has been absent from school with any other illness please ensure that they are fully recovered before they return. If they have had a fever, they must be free of a high temperature for 24hrs without the use of medication before they return. If they have had diarrhoea or vomiting they must be free of symptoms for 48 hrs before returning to school.

Help prevent the spread of swine flu by:

- Always covering your nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing.
- Disposing of dirty tissues promptly and carefully.
- Maintaining good basic hygiene, for example washing your hands often with soap and warm water to reduce the spread of the virus from your hands to face, or to other people.
- Cleaning hard surfaces, such as door handles, often and thoroughly using a normal cleaning product.
- Ensure children follow good hygiene practices.

This fact sheet has been compiled from information that can be found at:

www.nhs.uk

www.hpa.org.uk