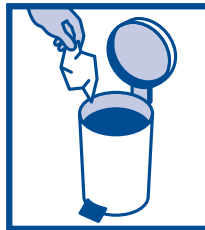


WORRIED ABOUT **SWINE FLU?**

Important
information for
Kirklees residents
about swine flu

13 July 2009

Stop germs spreading



Catch it. Bin it. Kill it.

In this leaflet you can find out:

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GENERAL INFORMATION ON SWINE FLU

What is swine flu and how is it spread?

Swine flu is generally a mild illness and most people should start to feel better after a few days without needing to go to their GP or A&E. Because it is a new type of flu (Influenza A H1N1v) most people under 60 will have no immunity to it and therefore everyone is at risk of catching it.

Flu viruses are spread in coughs and sneezes. If you cough or sneeze into your hand, the virus can spread easily onto other surfaces like door handles and telephones when you touch them. If other people touch the same surfaces or are close to you and breathe in the air after you've coughed or sneezed then the virus can get into their bodies and give them the flu.

There is no vaccine at the moment. Influenza viruses change very quickly. For a vaccine to provide adequate protection it needs to be produced for the particular strain in circulation. Scientists are making good progress in developing a new vaccine for swine flu and we are expecting the first batches of vaccines in August. There will be limited quantities initially and therefore high risk groups (see page 5) will be offered vaccination first. Further stocks will arrive in the autumn and winter, but it might well be next year before we can vaccinate everyone.

People are infectious to others soon after they develop symptoms, and they continue to produce the virus in coughs and sneezes, for up to five days after the symptoms start (seven days in children). People become less infectious as their symptoms subside, and once their symptoms are gone, they are no longer considered infectious to others. So **“Catch it, Bin it, Kill it”** is really important, see page 6.

How do I know if I've got swine flu?

The symptoms of swine flu are very similar to the symptoms of normal flu. **If you have swine flu you will have a high temperature** which is 38°C (around 100°F) or above. You might also have **two or more of the following symptoms**:

- cough
- sore throat
- runny nose
- severe tiredness
- loss of appetite
- pain in muscles and joints
- headaches

Some people might also have diarrhoea or vomiting.

You can check your symptoms on the NHS Direct website at **www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk**. This website has a dedicated flu symptom checker which you can use to work out if you have the flu.

Which people are most at high risk from swine flu?

Those who are at a higher risk of becoming seriously ill with influenza include:

- pregnant women

People with:

- chronic lung disease or had drug treatment for asthma in the past three years
- cystic fibrosis
- a suppressed immune system (whether caused by disease or treatment)
- diabetes
- sickle cell disease
- chronic neurological disease, e.g. multiple sclerosis, cerebral palsy, stroke, muscular dystrophy
- chronic heart disease
- chronic kidney disease
- chronic liver disease

As well as:

- children aged under five and people aged over 65

So people in the above groups should seek medical advice:

- a) if they develop symptoms of swine flu,
- b) if a person they live with develops swine flu,

preferably within 48 hours of symptoms starting but up to seven days might still be useful. There is further information in the section headed '**More information for at risk groups**' on **page 10**.

Note: Current evidence suggests that children under three years old and people aged 65 and older rarely seem to be affected.

What can I do to reduce my risk of catching or spreading swine flu?

There are important actions which all of us can take to reduce the risk of catching or spreading swine flu:

- Hygiene measures are essential to help to reduce the spread of all viruses, including the swine flu virus. These include:
 - **CATCH IT** - Covering your nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing and using a tissue when possible – if someone coughs or sneezes and they do not cover it, those droplets can spread about one metre (3ft).
 - **BIN IT** - Disposing of dirty tissues promptly and carefully. Don't pop it back in your pocket to reuse.
 - **KILL IT** - Maintaining good basic hygiene, for example washing hands frequently with soap and water to reduce the spread of the virus from your hands to your face or to other people, especially after sneezing.
 - Cleaning hard surfaces (such as door handles and telephones) frequently using a normal cleaning product.
- If you do become ill stay at home until two days after your acute symptoms resolve – you can get the help you need from the NHS and your flu friends as described in the next section.



What can I do to prepare in case I catch swine flu?

You should prepare now by:

- **Confirming a network of ‘flu friends’** – friends and relatives who could help you if you fall ill. They could collect medicines and other supplies for you so you do not have to leave home and possibly spread the virus.
- **Making sure you have adequate quantities of paracetamol based cold and cough remedies in your medicine cupboard** in case you or your family are affected by swine flu. Please be careful NOT to take paracetamol based cold and cough remedies while also taking ordinary paracetamol.
- If you have a long term condition make sure you have enough medication to last if you become ill and need to stay at home (also see page 12).

What should I do if I think I’m infected and how can I best care for myself?

You should NOT go to your GP practice, A&E, Walk-in Centres or your chemist if you suspect you have swine flu. This is because you might spread the illness to others and to help the NHS continue to treat those who need medical care.

If you think you have swine flu, you should:

1. First go online to **www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk** and check your symptoms.
2. If you feel you need further advice call NHS Direct on 0845 46 47.
3. If you are still concerned you should call your GP, who can provide a diagnosis over the phone. Your GP will confirm whether you need antiviral drugs.

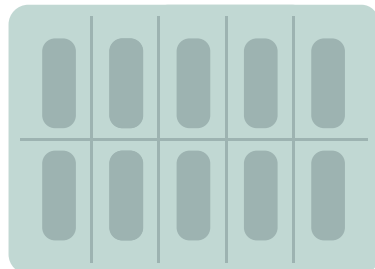
4. If you are prescribed antiviral drugs by your GP, a healthy friend or relative (flu friend) can pick up the prescription from the GP practice and collect the antiviral drugs from an antiviral collection point. It is important to complete the prescribed course.
5. If you feel you have symptoms of swine flu and you feel you may require **urgent** medical attention because of it, telephone your GP. If the surgery is closed follow their instructions for contacting the emergency doctor. **Do not turn up at A&E unannounced as you could expose other people to the infection.**

If you have swine flu symptoms you should isolate yourself at home and restrict your contact with people. As with ordinary flu, you should drink lots of fluids, take lots of rest and use standard paracetamol-based cold remedies to reduce your temperature and help relieve symptoms. If possible, keep a small supply of these at home or ask your flu friend to get these for you.

What is the treatment for swine flu?

It is important to remember that many people will be able to recover from swine flu without the need for antiviral drugs. If you are not in a higher risk group as described on page 5 and have no underlying medical conditions you probably do not need any antiviral drugs. You can treat yourself at home with over-the-counter paracetamol-based cold remedies – remember to drink plenty of fluids .

Swine flu can be treated with the antiviral medicines Tamiflu® and Relenza®. Ideally take within 48 hours of developing symptoms to be most effective but up to seven days if still symptomatic.



Your GP will have the latest information on current antiviral collection points.

Antiviral drugs are **not** a cure, but they can help you recover by:

- relieving some of the symptoms
- reducing the length of time you are ill by around one day
- reducing the potential for serious complications, such as pneumonia

It is worth remembering though that antiviral drugs, such as Tamiflu®, can have side effects including:

- nausea
- vomiting
- stomach aches

These side effects can be significantly reduced by taking your Tamiflu® with food.

Tamiflu® is in capsules of gelatine, so if you are unable to take gelatine, open the capsule and take the contents with a small spoonful of jam or honey. Please note that it is quite bitter.

How can I help the NHS care for those who really need their help?

You can help yourself and others by allowing the NHS to deal with more serious illnesses by treating minor ailments yourself. Your pharmacist can also help with minor ailments. Visit the NHS Choices website to find out more about self-care:

www.nhs.uk/yourhealth/pages/whatisselfcare.aspx

MORE INFORMATION FOR AT RISK GROUPS

Pregnant women

Are pregnant women more likely to catch swine flu?

Yes. Pregnant women are more susceptible to all infections, because their immune system is naturally suppressed in pregnancy. They are especially high risk to swine flu, as this virus is affecting younger age groups in particular.

Does swine flu pose special risks in pregnant women?

Pregnant women have an increased risk of complications from any type of flu. Possible complications are pneumonia (an infection of the lungs), difficulty breathing and dehydration, which are more likely to happen in the second and third trimester.

There is a chance that these complications could lead to premature labour or miscarriage. We don't yet have enough information to know how likely these risks are. It is therefore important to take antiviral medication as soon as swine flu symptoms start, as this can reduce the length of time you are ill and reduce the potential for such complications.

Can I take antiviral drugs if I am pregnant?

Yes, on the advice of a doctor. Relenza®, (an inhaled antiviral drug that treats flu without reaching the developing foetus) is currently recommended for use in pregnancy in the UK.

An expert group has reviewed the risk of antiviral treatment in pregnancy, which is extremely small – much smaller than the risk posed by the symptoms of swine flu.

Should I stop breastfeeding if I need to take antiviral drugs?

Antiviral drugs are excreted into breast milk in very small (insignificant) amounts. Women who are breastfeeding should therefore continue to do so while receiving antiviral treatment. If a mother is ill, she should continue breastfeeding and increase feeding frequency. If she becomes too ill to feed, then expressing milk might still be possible.

Children and babies

Can children take antiviral drugs?

Yes, on the advice of a doctor. Tamiflu® is safe for infants aged one and older, at a reduced dose. Relenza® (an inhaler) can be used by children aged five and older under the supervision of an adult.

Can babies under the age of one take antiviral drugs?

Children under one can be treated with Tamiflu®, as long as they are treated under medical supervision.

Note: current evidence suggests that children under three years old do not seem to be affected by swine flu in the UK.

Higher risk people with certain long term conditions

It is essential for these groups to get early medical advice if they develop swine flu symptoms.

If a member of your household is diagnosed with swine flu, you might wish to talk to your GP for further advice.

It is particularly important to make sure that you have an adequate supply of your usual medication. Don't wait till you have run out. Contact your local pharmacy to arrange to pick up your repeat prescriptions in good time as they may be extra busy at this time.

Long term lung disease (including asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and cystic fibrosis)

You are no more likely to catch swine flu than anyone else. However, if you do catch a respiratory infection, including swine flu, it can add to the breathing difficulties you may have.

Tamiflu® is safe to take. Relenza® (an inhaler) is usually not given to people with asthma as on rare occasions it can cause breathing complications.

Diabetes

You are no more likely to catch swine flu than anyone else. If you do catch it however, your blood glucose might increase and your diabetes treatment might need to be adjusted accordingly. If you start to vomit or become unwell, then contact your GP as soon as possible.

Liver disease

If you have liver disease you are no more likely to catch swine flu than anyone else. If you do catch it, antiviral drugs are safe to

take – there is no interaction between these and antiviral drugs you may already be taking to treat hepatitis.

Epilepsy

Antiviral treatments are not thought to affect medicines taken to control epilepsy.

Immunosuppressed people (caused by disease or treatment)

If you take medication or have an illness that suppresses your immunity you have a greater risk of becoming infected with any virus, including swine flu, and will be less able to fight it off once you have it. **On the advice of a doctor it is safe for you to take Tamiflu® or Relenza®.**

Kidney disease

If you have severe kidney disease or are under the care of a kidney specialist, Relenza® may be a safer antiviral for you than Tamiflu®. Your doctor will advise on which one is best for you.

Chronic heart disease, neurological disease, sickle cell disease

You are no more likely to catch swine flu than anyone else. However, if you do catch it you need to seek medical advice early.

Older people

Most cases so far in the UK have been in those younger than 60. It is thought that some older people might have partial resistance to the swine flu virus, due to being exposed to a similar flu virus in a previous pandemic. Older and frail people are however

more likely to develop complications from any type of flu, and are generally less able to fight it off; so if they develop swine flu symptoms they need to seek medical help early.

Carers

I look after someone who is very ill/disabled. What if I become too ill to care for them?

As a carer, you should probably begin planning for an emergency caring situation as soon as possible. The best way to get help with planning for a caring emergency is to talk to Kirklees Council Carers Gateway on 01484 223000. They will offer advice and may be able to give you options of what is available to you.

It is unlikely that emergency respite care will be available from the council because a flu pandemic means that respite care homes may be closed to avoid the virus spreading further. We suggest you talk to family, friends and neighbours and form a network of "flu friends" so that you and the person you care for are looked after.

Think about:

- What if you get flu?
- What if the person you care for gets flu?
- What if your home care worker, nurse or other carer cannot come to work?
- What if the day centres close?

For other information and advice please call Kirklees Council Carers Gateway on 01484 223000.

You can also call Carers Direct, a national 24 hour helpline for unpaid carers on 0808 8020202 www.nhs.uk/carersdirect

USEFUL CONTACTS

Flu symptom checker - www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk

Swine flu information line - 0800 1 513 513

NHS Direct - 0845 46 47

Your GP

Carers Gateway - Tel: 01484 223000

Email: carers.gateway@kirklees.gov.uk

Web site: www.kirklees.gov.uk

Department of Health - www.dh.gov.uk

Health Protection Agency: www.hpa.org.uk

Sources for material:

NHS Choices

Health Protection Agency

Department of Health

NHS Direct

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Date:

13 July 2009

The information in this leaflet was correct at the above date.

To keep up-to-date with any further changes, please check the above websites or **www.kirklees.nhs.uk**

SWINE FLU **INFORMATION**

0800 1 513 513

www.nhs.uk

www.direct.gov.uk/swineflu

Calls to this number are free from UK landlines and most mobiles.

NHS Kirklees
St Luke's House
Blackmoorfoot Road
Crosland Moor
Huddersfield
HD4 5RH

Tel: 01484 466000
Fax: 01484 466111

www.kirklees.nhs.uk

This information can be made available in languages other than English. It can also be made available in large print, Braille, or on audiotape. For copies, please telephone 01484 466000.