



Swine Flu

What are the symptoms of swine flu?

The symptoms of swine flu in people are similar to the symptoms of regular human seasonal flu and include:

- Fever
- Fatigue
- Lack of appetite
- Coughing
- Sore throat
- Pain in muscles and joints
- Headache and chills
- Some people with swine flu will also report vomiting and diarrhoea

Can I catch it?

The virus is contagious and can spread between people, although it is not known how easily. It can be caught:

- From person to person by coughing or sneezing
- From touching an object such as a door handle which has virus on it from someone infected with flu

What can I do to protect against infection?

- General hygiene can help to reduce transmission of all viruses
- Cover your nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing
- Use a tissue whenever possible
- Dispose of dirty tissues promptly and carefully
- Maintain 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
- Clean hard surfaces (such as door handles) frequently using a normal cleaning product
- Stay at home if you think you may have the swine flu virus
- Make sure adults and children follow this advice

Much of the spread that we have seen so far has happened in schools.

We know that children are especially vulnerable to infections and can receive greater exposure than adults due to a number of factors, including their mixing patterns at school and lack of understanding about good infection control and the importance of respiratory and hand hygiene.

If you think you may have swine flu?

You should first check your symptoms on www.nhs.uk, look at the information on www.hpa.org.uk or call the Swine Flu information line on 0800 1 513 513.

If you are still concerned please do NOT go to your GP surgery.

Contact the National Pandemic Flu Service on 0800 1513 100 or

www.direct.gov.uk/pandemicflu.

The operator or on screen instructions will advise you.

If you fall into one of the high risk groups ring your GP, who can provide a diagnosis over the phone. It is also important to make sure you follow basic hygiene precautions.

If your GP thinks you have swine flu an authorisation voucher for antiviral medication will be given. You will need a flu friend (family or friend) to collect the voucher from the surgery and travel to the collection point to collect your antivirals. We may also make arrangements for a nose and throat swab to be taken.

When is antiviral medication given?

Antiviral medication does not cure the infection but reduces the development of the virus, lessens the symptoms and helps the body recover. It should be taken as soon as possible, ideally within 48 hours of the infection starting. People who have the virus will be offered antiviral medication.

Antiviral medication will not be given to the contacts of swine flu.

However, treatment will be given to those belonging to a high risk group where there is close prolonged contact with the ill person. The contact will be treated if at particularly high risk of complications from influenza. This decision will be taken by the GP with the assistance of other appropriate experts where necessary.

The high risks groups are those with:

- Chronic lung disease
- Chronic heart disease
- Chronic kidney disease
- Chronic liver disease
- Chronic neurological disease
- Diabetes mellitus
- Immunosuppression (whether caused by disease or treatment)
- Patients who have had drug treatment for their asthma within the past three years
- Pregnant women Children under 5 yrs old
- People aged 65 years and over