

10th July 2009

Dear Parent / Guardian

You may be concerned about swine flu and what it means to you and your family so I am writing to provide you with some 'questions and answers' that will help you understand what to do if you are affected by swine flu.

Now that the swine flu virus is spreading in communities, the NHS has recently moved from what was called a '*containment*' phase to a '*treatment*' phase. This means that treatment will now only be given to patients who have the symptoms of swine flu rather than treating all persons known to have contact with them. Whilst this means the number of swine flu cases are increasing, it does not mean the illness is becoming more serious. Most people have experienced mild symptoms and have got better in a week.

I have included some useful telephone numbers and websites for you to obtain up-to-date information and advice in the future at the end of this letter.

I think my child has / I have the symptoms of swine flu. What should I do?

Check the symptoms. The most common symptoms are very similar to normal seasonal flu and include:

- sudden fever
- sore throat
- diarrhoea
- headache, aching muscles, chills
- feeling generally unwell, tiredness
- and a dry cough or shortness of breath
- sneezing, runny nose, loss of appetite

You can double check your symptoms by either:

- visiting the NHS website www.nhs.uk or by calling the Swine Flu Information Line on 0800 1 513 513

I still think my child / I have swine flu, what should I do?

Call your GP who will be able to provide a clinical diagnosis over the phone.

If Swine Flu is confirmed, the GP will give you a prescription to get antiviral medicine. You should ask someone who does not have Swine Flu symptoms to pick up your prescription for you and take it to a local 'Antiviral Collection Point'; this person would be referred to as your '*flu friend*'. The location of this will be given out with the prescription.

Should my child / I stay at home?

If you or your child has the symptoms or has been diagnosed with swine flu you / they should stay at home for at least a week.

A person with symptoms should NOT go to their GP surgery, Walk-in Centre or local A&E Dept. unless advised to do so by a health professional.

Other members of the same family, who have no symptoms, should go to school or work as normal because they are not infectious. However, if they start to develop symptoms they should stay at home, check their symptoms and if necessary phone their GP.

Will school be closed?

There is no greater risk of your child catching swine flu at school than catching it anywhere else in the community. Bearing this in mind, it is unlikely that schools will be closed if pupils have swine flu.

Will friends and family of people with swine flu get antiviral medicine?

They will not be given antiviral medicines unless they develop symptoms themselves.

Will my child / I be OK?

For the vast majority of people swine flu is quite a mild illness. Most people recover within a week, even without antiviral treatment.

In very few cases it can be a more serious illness. People with existing health conditions may be at more risk if they catch swine flu.

Sadly a very small number of people with swine flu have died. Please do remember that this is a very small number and that for the vast majority the effects of swine flu are quite mild.

What can we do to protect ourselves?

Follow good hygiene practices as these will help to slow the spread of the virus and will be the single most effective way of protecting yourself and others from possible infection.

When you cough or sneeze it is especially important to follow the rules of good hygiene to prevent the spread of germs:

- Always carry tissues and use clean tissues to cover your mouth and nose when you cough and sneeze
- Bin the tissues after one use
- Wash your hands with soap and hot water or use a sanitizer gel regularly

There's a simple way to remember this: **CATCH IT, BIN IT, KILL IT.**

Everyday items such as door handles, computer keyboards, mobile and ordinary phones and the TV remote control are all common surfaces where flu viruses can be found. Keeping them clean will help prevent the spread of the virus

What is the school doing about swine flu?

Schools are working closely with the NHS, Liverpool City Council and other partners to take all appropriate measures to protect children and families.

As the end of the school year approaches, we will continue to work with key partners to ensure that we are doing all that is necessary to plan for the new school year in September 2009.

How do I keep up to date with information about swine flu?

Visit the NHS website at www.nhs.uk

Call the National Swine Flu Information line: 0800 1 513 513

Check your local newspaper and radio station for updates and announcements

I hope this information has been useful to you.

Yours faithfully