

Swine Flu – update for schools

NHS update

The Government has moved to a treatment phase to manage the current pandemic flu outbreak.

Suspected swine flu cases will now be diagnosed on the basis of clinical assessment rather than laboratory testing. Everyone who has flu like symptoms will be advised on the best course of action to take and may be given antivirals depending on personal circumstances. Routine swabbing of suspected cases will now stop, and the Health Protection Agency (HPA) will no longer trace close contacts and provide antivirals to limit spread.

Therefore, the public health interventions to reduce spread are no longer appropriate and the focus must move to the treatment of individual patients.

What does this mean for schools?

The updated Government policy on schools is that they should **not** close because of individual cases of swine flu. However, schools **may** need to take the decision to close if local circumstances require it eg. if a significant number of pupils or teachers are ill. All schools should carry out a risk assessment and act as necessary, according to established procedures for the emergency closure of schools. The decision to close is for local management, to be made by the headteacher in consultation with the Chair of Governors. Headteachers are asked to contact the Area Director at their local area office (contact details shown below) to give notice of intended closure, or to seek advice.

Schools should continue to operate as normal and follow the same processes as if pupils were affected by normal flu, or any other illness. Remain alert to any child exhibiting flu-like symptoms and promote good practice measures to reduce the spread of infection.

Contact details:

- New Forest Area Office (Western) – 02380 816127
- Fleet Area Office (North and East) – 01252 814755
- Havant Area Office (South East) – 02392 441471

Good practice hygiene

General infection control practices and good respiratory hand hygiene can help to reduce transmission of all viruses, including the pandemic flu. This includes:

- covering your nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing, using a tissue when possible.

- maintaining good basic hygiene, for example washing hands frequently with soap and water to reduce the spread of virus from your hands to face or to other people.
- disposing of dirty tissues promptly and carefully.
- cleaning hard surfaces (e.g. door handles) frequently using a normal cleaning product.
- making sure your children follow this advice.

What should people do if they think they have swine flu?

People who think they have swine flu should first go online and check their symptoms on www.nhs.uk, or call the Swine Flu information line on 0800 1 513 513. If they are still concerned, they should then call their GP who will be able to provide a clinical diagnosis and appropriate advice on treatment over the phone.

What if a family member of a pupil has swine flu?

There is no reason for a pupil or a member of staff to remain at home if a family member has, or is suspected to have, swine flu. Their actions should be the same as if their family member were affected by normal flu and the pupil or member of staff should only remain at home if they themselves are displaying symptoms.

What should I tell parents?

A letter template is attached which schools can send to parents if they feel it is appropriate. This can be adapted to reflect local circumstances.

Useful links

Swine Flu – advice on schools from the HPA

<http://www.hpa.org.uk/web/HPAweb&Page&HPAwebAutoListName/Page/1244763940922>

Teachernet

<http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/educationoverview/flupandemic/>

Human Flu Pandemic Guidance

<http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/emergencies/planning/flupandemic/>