NHS SCOTLAND

NHS WALES GIG CYMRU

DHSSPS Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety www.dhsspsni.gov.uk

NHS

Useful contacts

Call **0800 1 513 513** to hear the latest information on swine flu.

England:
www.nhs.uk
www.direct.gov.uk/swineflu

Scotland:
www.nhs24.com

Wales:
www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk
www.wales.gov.uk/health

Northern Ireland:
www.dhsspsni.gov.uk
www.nidirect.gov.uk

If you are planning to travel abroad, check the Foreign and Commonwealth Office travel advice at www.fco.gov.uk/travel or call 0845 850 2829 for the latest information.

Essential information concerning travel, schools and colleges, and the workplace will be published on www.direct.gov.uk

WHAT IS THIS LEAFLET FOR?

The UK governments have produced this leaflet to give you information about swine flu. It tells you:

- **What swine flu is and how it could spread.**
- **What the UK governments have done to prepare for a wider outbreak of flu.**
- **What you can do to protect yourself and others against flu.**
- **Other actions you can take in case swine flu becomes more widespread.**
- **What to do if you think you have flu symptoms.**
- **How you can keep up to date with the latest information about swine flu.**

Please keep this information safe. You may need to refer back to it if swine flu becomes more widespread.

WHAT IS SWINE FLU AND HOW IS IT DIFFERENT FROM ORDINARY FLU?

Swine flu is a respiratory disease and has some elements of a virus found in pigs. There is no evidence of this disease circulating in pigs in the UK and scientists are investigating its origins.

Swine flu has been confirmed in a number of countries and it is spreading from human to human, which could lead to what is referred to as a pandemic flu outbreak.

Pandemic flu is different from ordinary flu because it's a new flu virus that appears in humans and spreads very quickly from person to person worldwide. The World Health Organization (WHO) is closely monitoring cases of swine flu globally to see whether this virus develops into a pandemic.

Because it's a new virus, no one will have immunity to it and everyone could be at risk of catching it. This includes healthy adults as well as older people, young children and those with existing medical conditions.

HOW DOES SWINE FLU SPREAD?

Flu viruses are made up of tiny particles that can be spread through the droplets that come out of your nose and mouth when you cough or sneeze.

When you cough or sneeze without covering your nose and mouth with a tissue, those droplets can spread and others will be at risk of breathing them in.

If you cough or sneeze into your hand, those droplets and the germs in them are then easily spread from your hand to any hard surfaces that you touch, and they can live on those surfaces for some time. 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.

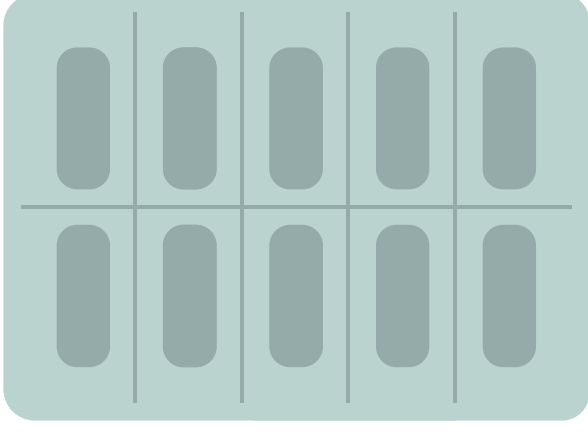
If other people touch these surfaces and then touch their faces, the germs can enter their systems and they can become infected. That's how all cold and flu viruses, including swine flu, are passed on from person to person.

WHAT HAVE THE UK GOVERNMENTS BEEN DOING TO PREPARE?

We have been planning for a flu pandemic for a number of years, and the UK plan has been identified as one of the best by the World Health Organization.

While the current situation is serious, there's good reason for us to be confident that we can deal with it. Thanks to the work of scientists who have studied previous pandemics, we know more now about treatments and how to stop the virus spreading than ever before.

We have a good stockpile of antiviral drugs (including Tamiflu® and Relenza®) – enough to treat more than 33 million people (half the UK population), and we are planning to increase this.



Antiviral drugs are not a cure, but they help you to recover if taken within 48 hours of symptoms developing, 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.

IS THERE A VACCINATION I CAN HAVE?

Not at this stage. This type of flu is not the same as seasonal flu: it involves a completely new type of virus. A vaccine can only be developed when the specific strain has been identified, and it would then take several months to produce.

The UK governments have agreements in place with manufacturers so that we can get stocks as soon as possible after a vaccine has been developed.

WHAT CAN I DO TO PROTECT MYSELF AND OTHERS AGAINST FLU?

The best thing you can do to protect yourself is to follow good hygiene practices. These will help to slow the spread of the virus and will be the single most effective thing you can do to protect yourself and others from 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.**
- **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 a sanitiser gel often.**

There's a simple way to remember this:

CATCH IT, BIN IT, KILL IT.

DO I NEED A FACE MASK?

You may have seen face masks being given out to the public in other countries on the news. However, the available scientific evidence shows that these basic face masks don't protect people from becoming infected.

The best way to protect yourself and stop the spread of flu viruses is by using and disposing of tissues and washing your hands, as explained on the previous page.

Remember to CATCH IT, BIN IT, KILL IT.

WHAT ELSE CAN I DO?

There are some other useful actions you can take now to prepare in case swine flu becomes more widespread:

Set up a network of 'flu friends'.

Flu friends are neighbours, friends and relatives who can help you if you get ill. For example, they could collect medicines, food and other supplies for you, so that you don't have to leave home if you are ill.

Keep up to date with the latest information on swine flu and follow public health advice and instructions.

If swine flu spreads, you need to keep informed so that you know what else you can do to protect yourself and your family. As the situation changes, you should keep up to date by watching TV, listening to the radio, checking the internet and looking out for announcements in the press.

The inside front cover of this leaflet gives details of websites and phone numbers you can use to find out the latest information.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I HAVE JUST RETURNED FROM MEXICO OR AN AFFECTED COUNTRY AND I THINK I MIGHT HAVE SWINE FLU?

Stay at home.

Check your symptoms on www.nhs.uk if possible.

Call the Swine Flu Information Line on 0800 1 513 513 to hear the latest advice.

If you have taken these steps and are still concerned, call your GP. Or you can call NHS Direct on 0845 4647 in England, NHS 24 on 08454 24 24 24 in Scotland, NHS Direct Wales on 0845 4647 in Wales or in Northern Ireland call 0800 0514 142. They will give you advice on your symptoms and the next steps you should take.

Do not go into your GP surgery or local accident and emergency department unless you are advised to do so or you are seriously ill, because you might spread the illness to others. Ask a flu friend to go out for you.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

Some of the symptoms are the sudden onset of **fever**, **cough** or **shortness of breath**. Other symptoms can include headache, sore throat, tiredness, aching muscles, chills, sneezing, runny nose or loss of appetite.

It is important for us to make sure that you have up to-date advice. This will include further information on how to access antiviral drugs, should the virus become more widespread in the UK. **The Swine Flu Information Line on 0800 1 513 513 will be updated regularly.**