

# Preparing for swine flu

Guidance and resources for further and higher education settings



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# Introduction

The purpose of this document is to provide public health advice and resources for tertiary education settings that will help to reduce the spread of the swine flu (pandemic (H1N1) 2009 influenza) strain among students and staff during the 2009-2010 academic year.

Swine flu is now widespread in the local community and institutions should be prepared for cases in the coming months.

Educational institutions should continue to operate as normal, while remaining alert to any students or staff exhibiting influenza-like illness.

## Planning for swine flu

There are many actions you can take to plan for swine flu, including making plans for how you would cope when staff go off sick or have to care for others who are sick.

In advance of having cases of swine flu at your institution, you can ensure that facilities for good hygiene are available (Appendix 1) and you can raise awareness of the above measures with students and staff (sample letters 1 and 2). Resources are listed in Appendix 3.

## Responding to cases

If you do have cases of swine flu among students or staff, a checklist of actions that you should undertake is included in the pack (Appendix 2). These include optimising hygiene measures, alerting other students and staff members, and excluding those who have symptoms. The pack also offers important guidance and posters for display (Appendices 4, 5 and 6).

The most important advice is that staff or students who have symptoms of influenza-like illness should stay at home. Students who are living in shared accommodation should stay in their halls of residence and avoid mixing with others until they have recovered and are free of symptoms. This is to avoid spreading the infection.

The institution should consider setting up 'buddy' schemes for students to ensure that if they contract flu then somebody will ensure they receive food and basic medication.

Staff or students with suspected swine flu are advised to call the National Pandemic Flu Service on 0800 1513 513 or at:

[www.direct.gov.uk/pandemicflu](http://www.direct.gov.uk/pandemicflu) (this is outlined in sample letter 2). Certain groups are advised to contact their doctor rather than use the National Pandemic Influenza Service (Appendix 3).

During the pandemic you do not need to inform your local health protection unit (HPU) routinely about swine flu cases unless:

- You feel that you need further advice.
- Any staff or students are requiring critical care due to swine flu.
- You have an outbreak of swine flu and have significant numbers of staff or students with underlying disease.

You can find the number of your local HPU online at [www.hpa.org.uk](http://www.hpa.org.uk) by using the search facility 'HPA in your region'.

# Sample letter 1

## From institution to students at the start of the year

Dear student,

This letter provides important information for students on swine flu, registering with a general practitioner, and immunisation against meningococcal infection and measles, mumps and rubella.

### 1. Swine flu

If you have influenza-like symptoms and are concerned that you may have swine flu stay at home and:

- If you have access to the internet you can check your symptoms using the NHS Direct symptom checker.
- If you do not have access to the internet or are still concerned, call the National Pandemic Flu Service on **0800 1513 100**. For those with internet access you can log onto the website at [www.direct.gov.uk/pandemicflu](http://www.direct.gov.uk/pandemicflu)

The service uses a simple checklist to diagnose whether you have swine flu.

- If it is thought you have swine flu then the National Pandemic Flu Service can give you access to free antiviral drugs if necessary. You will be given a voucher number and asked to arrange for a 'flu friend' to pick up your antiviral drugs from a distribution point.
- This service is available free of charge for both UK and international students.

Certain groups are advised to contact their doctor rather than use the National Pandemic Flu Service. These are people with serious underlying health conditions, pregnant women, those with children under one year of age or people whose condition suddenly gets worse and those whose condition is still getting worse after seven days (five days for a child).

### 2. Registering with a GP

All residents of the UK are entitled to use the NHS free of charge. If you are a student from overseas who is studying in the UK for six months or more you will have the same entitlement as any other resident. If you are moving you should register as soon as you can with a local GP or you can contact NHS Direct on 0845 4647 for information on where you can obtain a list of GPs practising near to your home address. Alternatively, if you have internet access, go to NHS Choices [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk) where you can enter your postcode and find a list of your nearest GPs.

### 3. Meningitis C immunisation

All students entering higher education for the first time in the UK are advised to talk to their general practitioner about immunisation against meningococcal C infection. It is important to do this before you start your course or as soon as possible afterwards. If you are coming from abroad, then you should also seek advice from your GP in this country as soon as possible.

Students who left school or college in the UK this summer should already have been offered the meningococcal C vaccine. If so, you do not need another dose. The meningitis C vaccination is recommended for young people under 25 years of age. Further information on signs and symptoms on meningococcal disease in young people can be found at the websites: [www.immunisation.nhs.uk/publications/aged\\_under\\_25.pdf](http://www.immunisation.nhs.uk/publications/aged_under_25.pdf) and [www.meningitis.org](http://www.meningitis.org)

### 4. Measles, mumps and rubella

As you may be aware, there has recently been an increase in mumps and measles cases nationally. People in their late teens to their mid-20s may not have had the opportunity to have a full course of the measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine. MMR is a safe and effective vaccine. If you have not already had a full course of two doses of MMR, we recommend you do so now and discuss this with your GP. Further information can be found at: [www.immunisation.nhs.uk](http://www.immunisation.nhs.uk)

Yours faithfully,

## Sample letter 2

### From institution to all students and staff

Dear student or staff member,

This letter aims to provide you with important information about the swine flu pandemic. Over the coming weeks we expect to see a number of cases of swine flu, as the second wave of the pandemic develops.

The Health Protection Agency (HPA) has advised us that because swine flu is now circulating more freely in the local community, the original measures of providing preventative antiviral drugs are no longer effective, as people may be exposed to the virus outside of the university setting or as soon as they have finished a course of drugs. Therefore preventative antiviral drugs are no longer being routinely offered to large groups of students.

The most important advice is that students and staff members who have symptoms of influenza-like illness should stay away and not mix with others outside of the home/halls of residence until they have recovered and are free of symptoms. This is to avoid spreading the infection as much as possible.

**The symptoms of swine flu are similar to those of seasonal flu and include:**

- Fever.
- Fatigue / unusual tiredness.
- Headache.
- Runny nose.
- Sore throat.
- Shortness of breath or cough.
- Loss of appetite.
- Aching muscles.
- Vomiting or diarrhoea.

**If you think you have swine flu you can contact the National Pandemic Flu Service on 0800 1513 100 or at: [www.direct.gov.uk/pandemicflu](http://www.direct.gov.uk/pandemicflu)**

Your symptoms will be checked and a course of antiviral drugs may be suggested. This is designed to reduce the symptoms and help a quicker recovery. You can also check any symptoms online at [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk). If you are still concerned, stay at home and call your GP for advice or assessment.

Certain groups are advised to contact their doctor rather than the National Pandemic Flu Service if they think they have swine flu. These are people with serious underlying health conditions, pregnant women, children under one year of age, people whose condition suddenly gets worse, or those whose condition is still getting worse after seven days (five days for a child).

It is important to point out that most people who have swine flu make a quick recovery at home. However, you should do what you can to prevent the infection from being spread to others by ensuring you follow these simple precautions:

- Covering your nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing, using a tissue when possible.
- Disposing of dirty tissues promptly and carefully.
- Washing your hands frequently with soap and water to reduce the spread of the virus from your hands to your face or to other people.
- Cleaning hard surfaces (such as door handles) frequently using a normal cleaning product.

If you would like further advice please contact either NHS Direct on 0845 4647 or visit the HPA website at: [www.hpa.org.uk](http://www.hpa.org.uk).

Yours sincerely,

## Appendix 1

# Planning checklist for swine flu and educational institutions

Date completed: \_\_\_\_\_ Completed by: \_\_\_\_\_

Actions to prepare for cases of swine flu	Yes	No
<b>BUSINESS CONTINUITY</b>		
Ensure 'business continuity plans' are in place, for example for coping with reduced numbers of staff who may be unwell, ability to maintain core activities, early staff sickness reporting and staff redeployment.		
Plan in place for monitoring impact of pandemic on organisation and 'trigger points' for action.		
Continuity plan in place in the event of severe disruption to the public transport network, power cuts and other utility failures.		
Up-to-date contact details for staff and students available.		
<b>DEALING WITH AND PREPARING FOR FLU CASES AT THE INSTITUTIONS</b>		
Plan is in place for communicating important information about swine flu to staff and students. This may be via email, a website, e-networks, text, local radio, by post or via another mechanism.		
Plan is in place for communicating with the media, for example standard responses and central communication.		
Links have been made with the primary care trust (PCT) Pandemic Flu Planning Committee.		
Develop a 'buddy scheme' or equivalent so that students who are living alone with no family members can get basic medication and food if they contract flu.		
Student Union fully engaged in pandemic planning.		
Plan in place to support international students (who may not be able to return home).		
Plan to include translation services.		
Plan in place to support students with learning difficulties.		
Plan in place to support students and staff if there are any swine flu fatalities at the institution.		
All resident students should be registered with a local general practitioner.		
Reinforce general education of students and staff about washing hands and respiratory hygiene ('Catch it, Bin it, Kill it' message).		
Students and staff are reminded not to attend the institution while they have symptoms.		
Identify facilities and support at the institution if mass vaccination is required.		
Notify staff of a contact point for informing the institution by telephone if they develop flu. It will be unrealistic to expect students to do this as there may be high numbers affected.		
<b>INFECTION CONTROL</b>		
Maintain adequate levels of cleaning materials in anticipation of increased cleaning.		
Consider need for alcohol gel in places where handwashing facilities are not available (for example entrances or exits), and maintain supplies in view of increased use.		
Disposable tissues are available.		
Foot operated bins are in use and in working order.		
Liquid soap and paper hand towels are available, used and stock levels adequately maintained in anticipation of increased use.		

## Appendix 2

# Checklist for dealing with swine flu cases in educational institutions

Date completed: \_\_\_\_\_ Completed by: \_\_\_\_\_

Dealing with diagnosed/suspected cases of swine flu among staff members or students	Yes	No
Send staff members who become unwell home immediately and exclude until symptom free.		
Send any student that becomes unwell home as soon as possible and exclude until symptom free.		
Ensure liquid soap and disposable paper hand towels are available at each handwashing facility and that foot-operated bins are in use and in working order.		
Tissues are available for use for staff and students.		
Enhanced awareness of other staff or students with influenza-like symptoms and exclusion of those with symptoms.		
Increase regular cleaning of surfaces and equipment using normal detergent, particularly frequently touched surfaces such as taps, door handles, stair rails, light switches and computer keyboards. Cleaning is recommended twice daily as a minimum and as necessary.		
Display swine flu posters (exclusion poster, handwashing and 'Catch it, Bin it, Kill it' (see resource sheets included in the pack).		
Cases within halls of residence need to stay within their rooms and be encouraged to alert a friend that they are unwell. Other students within the halls of residence should act as a 'flu buddy' for their peers. There needs to be a strong message, as with meningitis, of looking out for their friends/peers by maintaining social responsibility and while doing so adhering to appropriate infection control measures.		
If you have large numbers of cases, give consideration where possible, to avoiding bringing staff and students together in large crowds and enclosed spaces.		
Consider alerting your local health protection unit (HPU) <i>During the pandemic there is no need to alert the HPU routinely if you have the information that you need, i.e. contained in the swine flu pack, e.g. template letters, checklists etc.</i> <i>However, please contact the unit if:</i> a) You feel that you need further advice. b) A significant proportion of your students have an underlying medical problems. c) Any of your staff or students are requiring critical care in hospital due to swine flu.		

## Appendix 3

### Resource information sheet for swine flu

#### **Pandemic (H1N1) 2009 Influenza guidance:**

Health Protection Agency Pandemic Guidelines

[www.hpa.org.uk](http://www.hpa.org.uk)

Risk assessment: Pandemic (H1N1)2009 Influenza and pregnant teachers working in schools.

[www.hpa.org.uk/web/HPAwebFile/HPAweb\\_C/1247816542464](http://www.hpa.org.uk/web/HPAwebFile/HPAweb_C/1247816542464)

Department for Children, Schools and Families

[www.teachernet.gov.uk/educationoverview/flupandemic](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/educationoverview/flupandemic)

Travel advice for those entering or leaving the UK

[www.hpa.org.uk/web/HPAweb&Page&HPAwebAutoListName/Page/1244763940872](http://www.hpa.org.uk/web/HPAweb&Page&HPAwebAutoListName/Page/1244763940872)

#### **Infection control information:**

- NHS Handwashing poster
- NHS coughs and sneezes poster
- Swine flu leaflet
- Infection control guidance

#### **Latest developments and updates:**

Department of Health Press Releases

[www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publichealth/Flu/Swineflu/index.htm](http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publichealth/Flu/Swineflu/index.htm)

Health Protection Agency Pandemic (H1N1) 2009 Influenza Information

[www.hpa.org.uk/web/HPAweb&Page&HPAwebAutoListName/Page/1240732817665](http://www.hpa.org.uk/web/HPAweb&Page&HPAwebAutoListName/Page/1240732817665) or

[www.hpa.org.uk/swineflu](http://www.hpa.org.uk/swineflu)

#### **General information:**

NHS Choices

[www.nhs.uk/AlertsEmergencies/Pages/Pandemicflualert.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/AlertsEmergencies/Pages/Pandemicflualert.aspx)

NHS Direct

[www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk](http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk) (Tel: 0845 46 47)

World Health Organization Guidance for Individuals

[www.who.int/csr/disease/swineflu/guidance/individuals/en/index.html](http://www.who.int/csr/disease/swineflu/guidance/individuals/en/index.html)

National Pandemic Flu Service

[www.pandemicflu.direct.gov.uk](http://www.pandemicflu.direct.gov.uk) (tel. 0800 151 3513 for general advice)

#### **Infected persons or suspicion of infection:**

National Pandemic Flu Service

[www.pandemicflu.direct.gov.uk](http://www.pandemicflu.direct.gov.uk) (tel. 0800 151 3100).

## Appendix 3

### Resource information sheet for swine flu (continued)

Certain groups are advised to contact their doctor rather than contacting the National Pandemic Influenza Service if they think they have swine flu. These are: people with serious underlying health conditions, pregnant women, children under one year of age, people whose condition suddenly gets worse, or those whose condition is still getting worse after seven days (five days for a child).

#### Vaccination

Department of Health

[www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publichealth/Flu/Swineflu/InformationandGuidance/Vaccinationprogramme/index.htm](http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publichealth/Flu/Swineflu/InformationandGuidance/Vaccinationprogramme/index.htm)

NHS Choices

[www.immunisation.nhs.uk](http://www.immunisation.nhs.uk)

#### Preparedness and continuity planning for third sector organisations:

Pandemic influenza: supplementary information for third sector organisations

[www.dh.gov.uk/prod\\_consum\\_dh/groups/dh\\_digitalassets/documents/digitalasset/dh\\_099095.pdf](http://www.dh.gov.uk/prod_consum_dh/groups/dh_digitalassets/documents/digitalasset/dh_099095.pdf)

#### Reporting cases – the HPU does not need to be informed routinely, unless:

- The institution has an outbreak of swine flu and has significant numbers of students with underlying the disease.
- Staff or students require critical care in hospital due to swine flu.
- You feel that you need further advice.

Health Protection Agency: tel. 020 8200 1295

# SWINE FLU

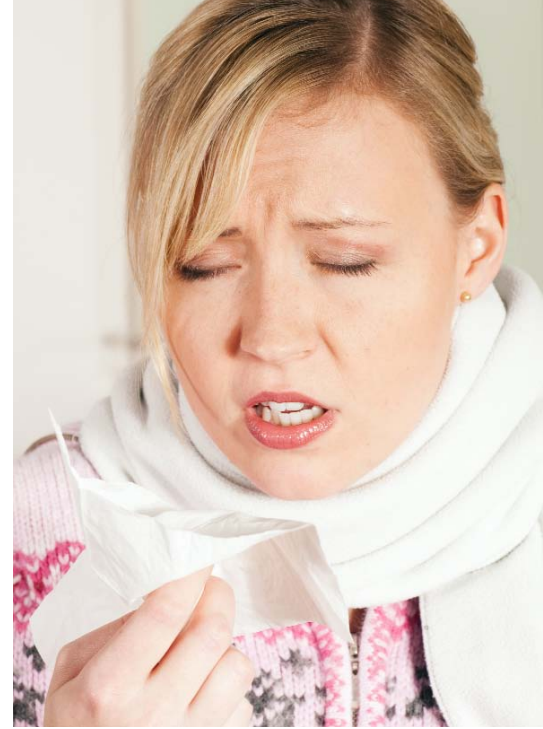
## Important notice



### Do you think you have swine flu?

Do you have a **high temperature** (38°C or above) and **two or more** of the following symptoms?

- Fever
- Fatigue/unusual tiredness
- Headache
- Runny nose
- Sore throat
- Shortness of breath or cough
- Loss of appetite
- Aching muscles
- Vomiting or diarrhoea



If so, don't go to your lectures. Stay at home until you have recovered and no longer have any symptoms.



Swine flu is generally mild and most people recover at home. However, other potentially serious illnesses can cause the above/similar symptoms. Always seek medical advice or help if you are concerned about your or a friend's illness.



Wet



Soap



Wash



Rinse



Dry

Stop germs spreading.  
The power is in your hands.

Have you washed your germs away? Wash your hands.

# CATCH IT

Germs spread easily. Always carry tissues and use them to catch your cough or sneeze.



# BIN IT

Germs can live for several hours on tissues. Dispose of your tissue as soon as possible.



# KILL IT

Hands can transfer germs to every surface you touch. Clean your hands as soon as you can.

