

Swine Flue (Pandemic H1N1 2009) – Advice Sheet for Parents

Is it dangerous?

Most people infected with this virus have a mild to moderate illness, but some have more severe illness.

What are the symptoms of Pandemic (H1N1) 2009 influenza?

In most children, the symptoms of Pandemic (H1N1) 2009 are similar to the symptoms of regular flu. They include:

Temperature over 38 C/100.4 F that begins suddenly and some of the following:

- Dry cough
- Sore throat
- Muscle aches and pains
- Headache
- Runny nose
- Severe weakness and fatigue
- Vomiting/diarrhoea (in some cases)

What are the differences between swine flu and the common cold?

It can sometimes be difficult to distinguish between the common cold and flu. The main difference is that the symptoms of influenza come on rapidly and are typically accompanied by muscle aches and a fever. The common cold has a more gradual onset and is associated with a runny nose and sneezing.

How does swine flu spread?

Flu virus spreads from person to person mainly through the coughing or sneezing of a sick person. Flu virus may also be spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with the virus (for example a tissue or door handle touched by the infected person) and then touches his or her eyes, nose, or mouth.

What should I do as a parent?

Two important actions to protect your family

1. Be aware of the symptoms of flu-like illness and know where to seek medical care.
2. Teach your children the following **good health habits** to help stop spread of germs:
 - Teach your children to cover their mouth and nose with a paper tissue when coughing or sneezing. If no tissue is available they should cough or sneeze into the inside of their elbow.
 - Teach your children to use a tissue only once and dispose of it quickly and carefully (a dustbin is fine).
 - Teach your children to wash their hands frequently with soap and water.

- Children who are sick should always stay home from the school
- Wash hard surfaces such as kitchen worktops, door handles, etc with a normal household cleaner as the virus can live on these surfaces. Do this frequently.

What should I do if my child gets sick?

If your child gets sick with a flu-like illness as described above you should:

- Keep your child at home and away from others as much as is possible to avoid spreading infection to others. If they are sick with flu they should stay home for 7 days from the onset of symptoms.
- Give your child simple anti-fever medication such as paracetamol or ibuprofen (NB aspirin should NOT be given to children under 16 years of age) and drink plenty of fluids.
- If you think you or your child may have swine flu you should call the **HSE Flu Information Line Freephone 1800 94 11 00** or check www.swineflu.ie for advice on what to do next.
- If you think your child needs to see the doctor because they have severe symptoms, remember to ring your doctor first. Do not visit the surgery unannounced.
- If your child is in a high risk group for complications of swine flu contact your doctor, even if their symptoms are mild (High risk group is people with: chronic lung, heart, kidney, liver, or neurological disease; immunosuppression (whether caused by disease or treatment); diabetes mellitus; people aged 65 years and older; children under 5 years (children under 2 years are at higher risk of severe complications); people on medication for asthma, severely obese people (pregnant women and people with haemoglobinopathies)

Should I send my child to school?

Yes, while schools are open parents should send their children there unless they have any symptoms. It is expected that schools will remain open even if there are some children out sick with swine flu. **However, in certain circumstances an educational institution may be advised to close.** This decision will be made in the light of expert advice from the local Department of Public Health who will always have the interests of pupils in mind. We urge parents not to withdraw their children unless given this advice.

What happens when a child in a school is identified as a case of swine flu?

If a student develops flu-like symptoms at their school, arrangements should be made for him/her to be taken home. The student should not return to their school until 7 days from the onset of symptoms have passed.

Why would a school stay open if there are children with Swine flu?

School closures and the distribution of antiviral medicines for prevention are

not recommended at this time because the virus is spreading in the community generally. People are likely to be repeatedly exposed to the virus in their everyday lives - closing a school will no longer be effective in slowing the spread of the virus as people could still be exposed outside the educational institution. In some special circumstances school closures might still be recommended.

- ***Precautions beign taken in the CBS Primary School***
- Every classroom has a supply of tissues and a dedicated bin. Use tissue once and then dispose of it.
- Every room in the school has been fitted with a sanitizing foam dispenser. Children are asked to use it on entry to class and after sneezing or coughing.
- Each classroom has been issued with sanitizing sprays and every desk surface and door handle, banister, etc. will be sprayed daily .
- All pupils will be taught respiratory etiquette. Children should cover their mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. If no tissue is available they should cough or sneeze into the inside of their elbow.
- Children will be asked to wash their hands frequently with soap and water.

Vaccine

Vaccine companies are manufacturing a vaccine for swine flu. The HSE will provide the vaccine to everyone in the country as soon as sufficient amount of vaccines are available. This may commence as early as autumn but it will take many months to vaccinate all people.

Where to find more information

The most accurate public information on the current situation can be found here:

www.swineflu.ie

www.hse.ie

www.hpsc.ie

www.dohc.ie

www.dfa.ie