



Protecting people  
Preventing harm  
Preparing for threats

## Advice for parents and carers of children

There are some simple ways in which you can help reduce the spread of swine flu infection. These include:

- 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;
- Cleaning hard surfaces (e.g. door handles) frequently using a normal cleaning product;
- Covering your nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing, using a tissue when possible;
- Disposing of dirty tissues promptly and carefully;
- Making sure your children follow this advice.

Swine flu has been seen to be generally mild in most cases, proving severe in only a small number of people.

Most people with swine flu recover at home. It is important to make sure that anybody with flu gets rest and has plenty of fluids.

It is important that, like everyone else, babies and children with flu should remain at home and avoid attending crèches, nursery schools or schools until they are free of symptoms.

### For children aged under one year

#### General advice

If your baby seems unwell and you think swine flu may be the cause you should call your GP, who can provide advice and treatment.

If your baby has a high temperature at or above 38°C and shows any of the symptoms below you should seek immediate medical advice:

- Severe breathing problems, grunting or noisy breathing when calm.
- Unduly sleepy or floppy.
- Severe dehydration, with sunken eyes and wrinkly skin.
- Has a change in skin colour, becoming pale or blue-ish.
- Strikingly irritable or agitated or having fits.

#### What is the treatment for babies with flu?

Children under one may be treated with an antiviral drug called oseltamivir (Tamiflu) given as a liquid. This drug reduces the virus's ability to spread in the body, helping the child to recover more quickly and reducing the risk of complications. Your doctor will provide advice about the need for this treatment for your baby.

#### What other medications can I give my baby to reduce their symptoms if they are unwell?

Babies can be given paracetamol-based medications (you must not use aspirin) to ease their symptoms and give them comfort. This can include sugar-free paracetamol suspension or liquid. Ask the pharmacist, your doctor or NHS Direct for advice.

#### My baby has been near someone who has been diagnosed with flu – can they be given Tamiflu as a preventative measure?

The first line of protection for babies aged under one year is maintaining good hygiene for everyone in the family, and the frequent cleaning of household surfaces.

Antiviral drugs will generally only be given, at a doctor's discretion, to people who have been diagnosed with swine flu. This is because the virus is now widespread and it is therefore no longer appropriate to use these drugs to try to prevent the spread of the infection. An exception, however, is their use for a close contact within a household who has serious underlying health problems.

If your baby has an underlying health problem then your doctor will advise you as to whether preventive treatment should be considered for your baby.

### **I am a parent who has been diagnosed with swine flu – can I pass this to my baby?**

Flu spreads mainly through the droplets that are released during coughing and sneezing. It is likely that parents or carers with swine flu will pass it to their children because flu spreads readily within households.

This is why it is very important to use disposable tissues when coughing and sneezing to catch the droplets and to wash hands with soap and water afterwards to destroy the virus.

If you are unwell with flu-like symptoms it is important to follow this advice and to clean any areas where you have been, using soap/detergent and water or normal household cleaning products. This will help to reduce the risk of passing the virus on to other people.

Where possible, you should try and minimise close contact with your child/children and other vulnerable people with underlying health problems, and ask other family members or friends to help you. However if this is not a realistic option, you should keep a close eye on your child and if he or she becomes unwell you should follow the advice set out in 'general advice' above.

### **My baby has been diagnosed with swine flu – do I need antiviral drugs to prevent me from becoming unwell so I can continue to care for them?**

Antiviral drugs will generally only be given, at a doctor's discretion, to people who have been diagnosed with swine flu. This is because the virus is now widespread and it is therefore no longer appropriate to use these drugs to try to prevent the spread of the infection unless they are in a one for the at risk groups.

## **For children aged 1 to 13**

### **General advice**

If your child seems unwell and you think swine flu may be the cause you should call the National Pandemic Influenza Service on 0800 1 153100/200. If you are still concerned, the service can provide advice and treatment over the phone or for young children you may contact your GP, who can provide diagnosis and advice.

If your child has a high temperature (at or above 38°C) and flu-like symptoms, and shows any of the symptoms below you should seek immediate medical advice:

- Severe breathing problems, grunting or noisy breathing when calm.
- Unduly sleepy or floppy.
- Severe dehydration, with sunken eyes and wrinkly skin.
- Has a change in skin colour, becoming pale or blue-ish.
- Strikingly irritable or agitated or having fits.

### **What is the treatment for children with flu?**

The antiviral drugs that are used to treat older children or adults with flu are oseltamivir (Tamiflu) and zanamivir (Relenza). These are medicines that are prescribed at a doctor's discretion to reduce the virus spreading in the body, help the patient to recover more quickly and reduce the risk of complications.

### **What else is important in caring for my child when they are ill with flu-like symptoms?**

Many of the over-the-counter treatments used by adults can be given to children for the symptomatic relief of the symptoms of flu in line with the instructions supplied with each medicine.

However, children under 16 must not be given aspirin or ready-made flu remedies containing aspirin. It is important to always read the label or check with the pharmacist that a medicine is suitable for use in children.

In addition to the medicines described above, unwell children, like adults, will need lots of rest and plenty of fluids to avoid dehydration. Lowering the temperature in the room can also be helpful when someone has a fever.

### **My child has been near someone who has been diagnosed with flu – can they take Tamiflu as a preventative measure?**

The first line of protection for children is maintaining good hygiene for everyone in the family, and the frequent cleaning of household surfaces.

Antiviral drugs will generally only be given to people who have been diagnosed with swine flu. This is because the virus is now widespread and it is therefore no longer appropriate to use these drugs to try to prevent the spread of the infection. An exception, however, is their use for a close contact within a household who has serious underlying health problems.

If your child has an underlying health problem then your doctor will advise you as to whether preventive treatment should be considered for your child

### **My child has underlying health complications and I think they have flu – what should I do?**

You should seek immediate medical advice. People who have underlying health complications are more at risk of experiencing complications from flu.

If your child is diagnosed as having flu then your doctor may prescribe antiviral drugs.

### **Caring for children aged 14 and older**

For treatment purposes children aged 14 and above are classed as an adult and would be diagnosed and treated in the same way as an adult.

The management of suspected flu in children over 14 is the same as it is for adults:

- Stay home and as far as possible avoid contact with other people and family members;
- Ensure you get plenty of rest;
- Drink plenty of fluids;
- Use standard cold and flu over-the-counter medicines. Many of the over-the-counter treatments used by adults can be given to children for the symptomatic relief of the symptoms of flu, in line with the instructions supplied with each medicine. However, children under 16 must not be given aspirin or ready-made flu remedies containing aspirin. It is important to always read the label or check with the pharmacist that a medicine is suitable for use in children.

If your child seems unwell and you think swine flu may be the cause you should call the National Pandemic Influenza Service on 0800 1 153100/200. If you are still concerned, the service can provide advice and treatment over the phone.

Your doctor may prescribe antiviral drugs if this is considered necessary after the illness has been assessed.

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