

Important information about swine flu

Easy read

This leaflet has important information to help you and your family keep well. **Keep it safe.**

Swine flu information 0800 1 513 513

www.direct.gov.uk/swineflu



This is an easy read booklet about swine flu. It is a shorter version of the booklet which came through people's letter boxes in May.



When we say **we** in this booklet we mean the governments of England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.



You may like to have someone to support you when you look at this booklet.



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Where to get more information

To get the latest information on swine flu:

Call **0800 1 513 513**.

Or you can visit these websites:

In England:

- www.nhs.uk
- www.direct.gov.uk/swineflu

In Scotland:

- www.nhs24.com
- www.scotland.gov.uk/swineflu

In Wales:

- www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk
- www.wales.gov.uk

In Northern Ireland:

- www.dhsspsni.gov.uk
- www.nidirect.gov.uk



If you plan to go abroad, check for advice at www.fco.gov.uk/travel



Or call **0845 850 2829**.



Visit www.direct.gov.uk for other important information about:

- travel



- schools and colleges



- what to do about flu at work.



What is this leaflet for?

This leaflet gives you very important information about swine flu.

It tells you:

- what swine flu is
- how it could spread
- what the government has done to get ready in case the flu spreads to a lot of people
- what you can do to protect yourself and other people against flu



- other things you can do if a lot of people catch swine flu



- what to do if you think you might have flu



- how you can keep up to date with the latest information.



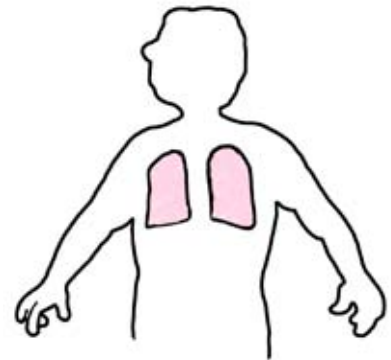
Please keep this booklet safe.

You may need it if a lot more people catch swine flu.

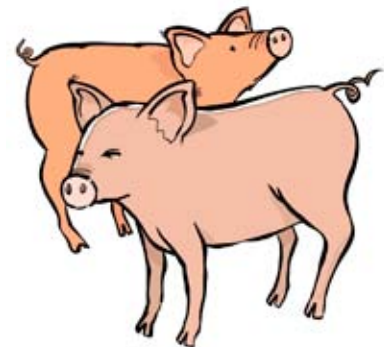


What is swine flu?

Swine flu is an illness of the lungs.



It is called **swine flu** because it is a bit like an illness that pigs can get. (Swine is another word for pigs.)



At the moment we do not think that swine flu is spreading among pigs.

Swine flu is caused by a virus. A virus is a sort of germ which makes people ill. The swine flu virus is spreading among people.



How is swine flu different from ordinary flu?

If a lot of people catch swine flu it could lead to a **pandemic flu outbreak**. Pandemic means across the world. An outbreak is when a large number of people get a disease very quickly.



Everyone is at risk of catching swine flu. This means healthy adults as well as older people, young children and people with other illnesses.

The World Health Organization keeps an eye on people's health. It is watching carefully to see whether swine flu will turn into a pandemic flu outbreak.



How does swine flu spread?

Flu is spread through the droplets that come out of your nose and mouth when you cough or sneeze.



- When you cough or sneeze, cover your nose and mouth with a tissue. If you don't, other people might breathe in the droplets and catch the flu.



- If you cough or sneeze into your hand it is easy to spread the virus from your hand onto things you touch.



After you have coughed or sneezed into a tissue, bin the tissue and always wash your hands with soap and water. If you have a special gel, then you can use this too.



- The virus can live for quite a long time on hard things like:

- door handles



- computer keyboards



- mobile and ordinary phones



- TV remote controls.



If other people then touch these things the virus can get into their bodies and they can catch flu.



How will I know if I have got swine flu?

These are the signs that show you are ill. Doctors and nurses sometimes call these symptoms:



- suddenly feeling hot or cold. This is called a **fever**.



- a **cough**



- feeling **short of breath**.



Other symptoms can be:

- **headache**



- **sore throat**



- **being tired**



- **aching muscles**



- chills



- sneezing



- runny nose



- not feeling hungry.



What are we doing to get ready?

We have been planning for a flu pandemic for a long time.

- The World Health Organization says our plans are some of the best in the world.



- Scientists and doctors now know a lot more about how to treat flu and how to stop it spreading.



So although this is a very serious problem, we think we can deal with it well.



Medicines

We already have enough flu medicines ready to treat more than half the people in the UK, and we are making more.



These medicines do **not** cure swine flu, but they help you to get better if you take them within 2 days of getting flu symptoms.



The medicines can:

- get rid of some of the symptoms



- make you better more quickly



- help stop you getting other problems like a bad chest infection.



Is there a vaccine?

A vaccine is a special injection to stop you catching flu.

At the moment we do **not** have a special vaccine for swine flu.



We need to know more about the virus first. It will then take a few months to make a new vaccine.



What can I do to help stop me and other people getting flu?

The best thing you can do to help stop yourself and other people from getting flu is to be careful not to spread the virus.



When you cough or sneeze it is very important that you:

- always carry tissues with you
- use a clean tissue to cover your mouth and nose every time you cough or sneeze – **catch it**
- bin the tissues after one use – **bin it**
- wash your hands often with soap and hot water or a special gel – **kill it.**



Remember: Catch it, bin it, kill it.

Do I need to wear a face mask?

You do not need to wear a face mask.



You may have seen people wearing face masks in other countries on the news on TV. But we think that these masks do **not** protect people from catching flu.



What else can I do?

Here are some other things you can do to be ready in case swine flu spreads and becomes a big problem.



Pick some flu friends

Flu friends are neighbours, friends and family who can help you if you get ill.



They could do things like collect medicines or food for you if you are ill, so that you do not have to leave home.



If you are ill and you need something, ask a flu friend to go out for you.



Keep up to date with the latest information

If swine flu spreads, you need to know what is happening so that you know what to do to help stop you and your family getting flu.



As things change, you should:

- watch TV
- listen to the radio
- check on the internet
- look out for information in the newspapers and
- follow the advice you are given.



There is a list of websites and phone numbers at the start of this booklet which you can use to find out the latest news and information.



What should I do if I have just come back from another country and I think I might have swine flu?

You should:

- stay at home



- check your symptoms at www.nhs.uk



- call the Swine Flu Information Line on **0800 1 513 513** to hear the latest advice.



If you have done all these things and you are still worried, you should call your doctor.



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 call **0800 0514 142** in Northern Ireland.



They will give you advice and tell you what to do next.



Do **not** go into your doctor's surgery or local hospital unless you are told to or you are seriously ill. This is because you might spread the flu to other people.



It is very important that you keep up to date.

We will put up to date information on the Swine Flu Information Line on 0800 1 513 513.

This will include more information about how to get the right medicine if more people get swine flu in the UK.



You can download this booklet at
www.nhs.uk
www.direct.gov.uk/swineflu
www.nhs24.com and
www.scotland.gov.uk/swineflu

