

# SWINE FLU – LATEST INFORMATION FROM IVY GROVE (07 Jun. 11)

## What is swine flu?

Swine flu is a respiratory illness caused by a virus that usually infects pigs. People do not normally get swine flu but human infection can happen. People have some natural immunity to flu strains that are in common circulation, but not to strains that circulate in other animals. Sometimes, humans and animals can pass strains of flu back and forth to one another, such as when people become ill with bird or swine flu. This usually occurs after a human has direct and close contact with animals that are ill. Mixing of human and animal flu viruses can lead to the development of new, changed viruses, to which people may have little or no immunity. Infection can develop and then spread quickly.

## What are the symptoms?

The symptoms of this swine flu are similar to the symptoms of regular seasonal flu and include fever, fatigue, lack of appetite, coughing, sore throat, pain in muscles and joints, headache and chills. Some people with swine flu have also reported vomiting and diarrhoea. So far however, the illness has been generally mild in most people. Most people will get better simply with self-help treatment that includes rest, paracetamol and plenty of fluids, as with regular flu.

## I think I have swine flu! What do I do?

If you develop flu-like symptoms, you should stay at home and ring **NHS Direct on 0845 4647**, or check your symptoms and get advice on [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk) or [www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk](http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk).

**PLEASE DO NOT COME TO SURGERY IF YOU THINK YOU HAVE SWINE FLU**

If, after seeking advice as above, you remain concerned, please stay at home and ring the surgery 01773 514130 for further advice. If you need to be assessed face to face, we will make the necessary arrangements for you to be seen. If you think you may have swine flu, you should not go to school or work, and you should stay at home and self-treat.

## Do I need antiviral treatment?

Antiviral treatment is currently being recommended to all those confirmed as having swine flu and particularly those at risk of developing complications from flu – for instance, those with chronic heart or chest disease, diabetes, the elderly, pregnant women and very young children. The issuing of antiviral treatment is being coordinated centrally by government. If swine flu is confirmed (either on the telephone or after face to face assessment), you will be given a voucher or unique reference ID, entitling you to treatment. This is not an NHS prescription and cannot be dispensed by a chemist. You will be given instructions on how a healthy friend or relative can fetch the treatment for you from a designated local collection centre. Please note antiviral treatment is not a cure for swine flu. It shortens the duration of the illness by about half a day, but only works if given within 48 hours of the onset of symptoms, and may also cause severe side effects. If your condition is mild and you are not in an at-risk group, you may choose not to take antiviral treatment and decide to self-treat. **Please see our more detailed leaflet on antiviral treatment.**

## I've been in contact with someone with swine flu! Do I stay off work or school?

If you are well, there is no need to avoid school, nursery, place of study or work or social gatherings. Being in contact with persons who are well, but who themselves have had contact with a swine flu case, does not carry any significant increased risk of you developing swine flu. Antiviral treatment is no longer being recommended for people who have been in contact with cases of swine flu. Workplaces and schools do not need to be closed even if there has been a confirmed swine flu case. Your workplace or school can get additional information from [www.hpa.org.uk/swineflu/public](http://www.hpa.org.uk/swineflu/public).

## How can I avoid catching swine flu?

Swine flu is highly contagious and spread person to person by coughing or sneezing and transmitted on objects like door handles. To prevent spread, cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing and bin the tissue. Wash hands regularly with soap and water and clean hard surfaces frequently with normal household cleaner. Pregnant women can reduce their risk of infection by avoiding unnecessary travel and crowded environments.