

# SWINE FLU ASSESSMENT – CLINICAL ALGORITHM

**NATIONAL  
PANDEMIC FLU  
SERVICE**

## Guide for use

- This algorithm is intended to be used to assess patients over 1 year old. It is not for assessment of children under 1 year.
- The assessment includes a series of questions concerning the patient's current symptoms and their medical history.
- Unless the patient requires an emergency referral to 999, the algorithm should be completed to the final question for each patient assessment.
- The assessment involves three steps:
  - STEP 1** – Determine whether the patient requires ambulance services (999)
  - STEP 2** – Confirm that the patient has flu symptoms and would benefit from antiviral treatment
  - STEP 3** – Identify whether the patient requires additional healthcare services
- Step 1 will identify patients who need emergency care. These patients should be directed to ambulance services (999) immediately.
- Step 2 will determine whether a patient should be authorised to receive antiviral treatment. If antiviral treatment is required, information about the patient must be used to authorise the correct antiviral for the patient.
- Step 3 will determine whether the patient should seek further assessment or advice from another healthcare service, and provide appropriate advice for the patient.

## STEP 1 – Emergency Assessment

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**1.1** Does the patient have any of the following symptoms?

- Are they unresponsive or unconscious, floppy, limp, or impossible or difficult to wake?
- Do they have a breathing problem that is so severe that they are unable to finish a sentence? Or if they are a child under 16, are they breathing irregularly, grunting, or is their chest collapsing in as they breathe?
- Do they feel that their throat is closing off and they are unable to swallow saliva or drooling excessively?
- Does their skin feel icy cold and wet to touch or is there a change in colour – blue or greyness – particularly around the lips, mouth, fingers or toes?
- Are they having a fit now?

**YES**

Refer patient to ambulance services (999)

**NO**

**1.2**

- Does the patient have clusters of tiny purple spots or a rash that looks like bleeding or bruising under the skin?
- Or, despite any pain they may have, is the patient completely unable to move their chin down to touch their chest?

**YES**

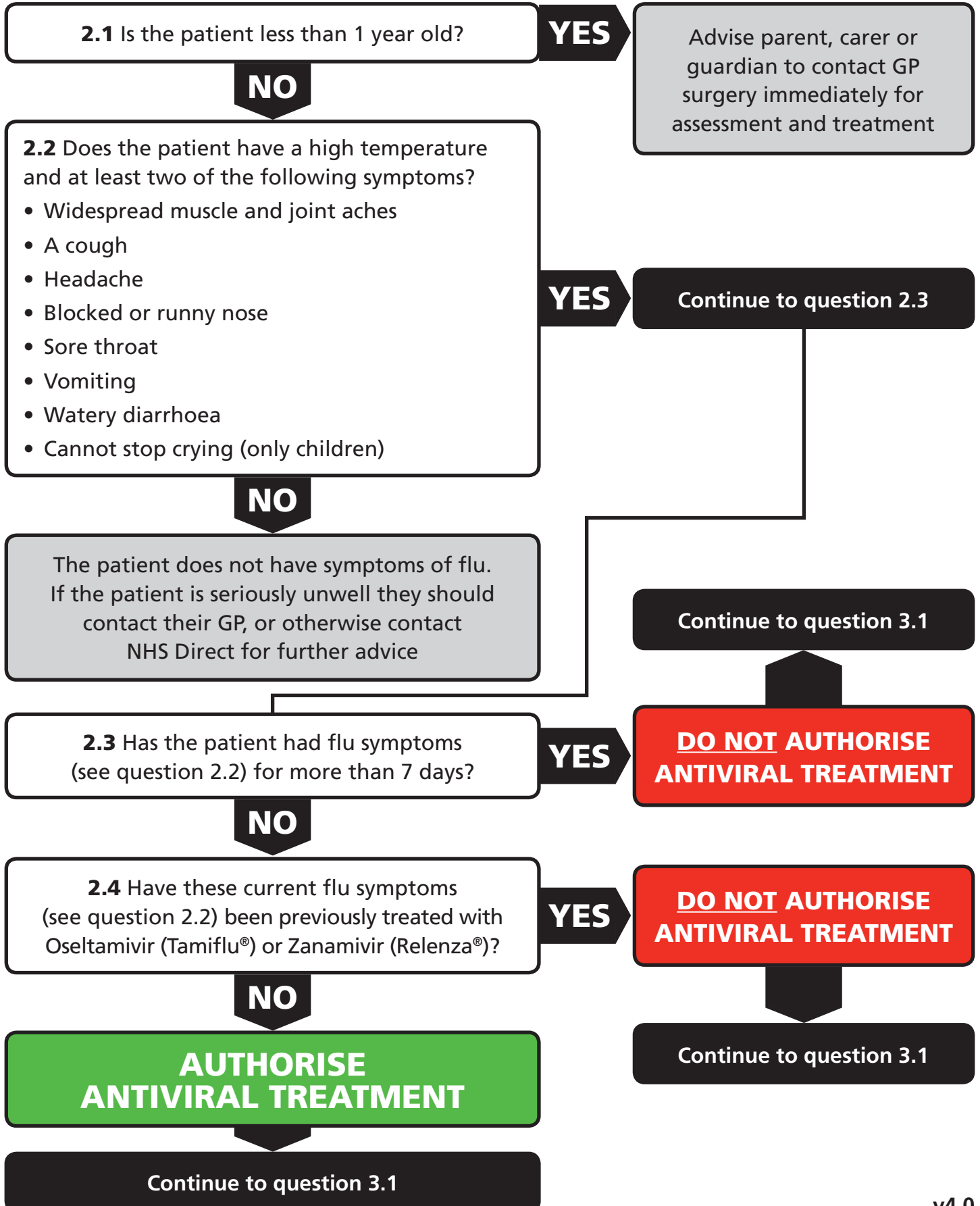
Refer patient to ambulance services (999)

**NO**

Continue to question 2.1

## STEP 2 – Flu assessment and authorisation of antiviral treatment

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## STEP 3 – Identify whether further assessment or advice is required

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**3.1** Is the patient also experiencing any of these additional symptoms?

- Breathing much faster than normal (particularly children)
- Sharp or stabbing chest pain when breathing
- Thick yellow, green, brown or bloody phlegm
- Breathing difficulties, for example unable to complete a sentence or, for children, chest skin sucked between ribs when breathing
- Uncharacteristic changes in behaviour such as drowsiness, new confusion or appearing terrified (particularly children)

**YES**

Advise patient to telephone GP surgery urgently

**NO**

**3.2** Has the patient's condition suddenly worsened, or if the symptoms have lasted for more than 7 days (or 5 for a child), are they still getting noticeably worse?

**YES**

Advise patient to telephone GP surgery

**NO**

**3.3** Is the patient:

- Having treatment for immune deficiency
- On immunosuppressive drugs such as regular steroids, methotrexate, azathioprine or cyclophosphamide
- Having, or recently completed, treatment for cancer, leukaemia or lymphoma
- Transplant recipient
- HIV positive

**YES**

Advise patient to telephone GP surgery

**NO**

Continue to question 3.4

Continued from question 3.3

**3.4** Does the patient have any of the following underlying conditions?

- Chronic lung disease or asthma which has been medically treated within the last 3 years
- Heart disease
- Diabetes or another metabolic disorder
- Chronic liver disease
- Cystic fibrosis
- Neurological conditions such as cerebral palsy, stroke, multiple sclerosis or muscular dystrophy
- Sickle cell disease

**YES**

Advise patient to contact GP surgery if underlying condition worsens

**NO**

**3.5** Does the patient have any additional symptoms as well as flu? For example:

- Drinking much less than usual (less than half feeds if for a child who is bottle fed)
- Persistent vomiting
- Severe earache
- Persistent watery diarrhoea
- Markedly reduced urine output (or dry nappies for children)

**YES**

Advise patient to contact NHS Direct for further advice to manage symptoms

**NO**

Continue to question 3.6

Continued from question 3.5

**3.6** Is the patient pregnant?

**YES**

Advise patient to telephone midwifery team (if have not already) to inform them that the patient is ill and to seek further advice

**NO**

**3.7** Does the patient attend a specialist renal or kidney clinic for the care of renal or kidney failure?

**YES**

Advise patient to contact their GP or specialist clinic if their general condition worsens. If the patient is having dialysis, they should inform their renal team now that they have flu.

**NO**

Provide patient with home care advice and authorise antiviral treatment if required

End of assessment