

swine flu update



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Current situation updated

Preparations for the national pandemic flu service continue ahead of this week's official launch.

The new service will provide flu advice over the telephone and on the web. It will also have the authority to prescribe antiviral medicine.

The service will relieve some of the current pressures on the system – particularly in primary care and A&E, and should ensure that GPs can focus their efforts on treating patients with more serious symptoms.

It remains the case that those people identified as being at greater risk of serious complications should keep in touch with their GP.

We will publish full details of the service later this week. Until then, existing arrangements for obtaining advice and advice and information remain in place.

The swine flu antiviral delivery service for those in need began today. See “help for people with no flu friend” below for details.

Most areas of Devon now have cases and we expect the number of people with the virus to rise significantly over the coming weeks and months.

Exeter and the surrounding area remains the centre of activity.

Healthcare services continue to function normally and reported sickness is low.

Eleven antiviral collection points are open in Devon PCT's area.

Most people in this country have been affected only mildly by the flu. This remains the position for people living in Devon.

Advice to GPs

GPs should make their own diagnosis over swine flu. If they feel it is clinically appropriate to swab for the virus, they can do so. But it is no longer a requirement.

Contact tracing and prophylaxis is now not normally carried out and patients should be advised to self isolate at home.

Since 2 July, when the treatment-only phase was announced, call volume to the South West Flu Response centre has dropped significantly.

In agreement with NHS South West, the centre will close at 5pm today.

This is in line with the position in other English regions.

The Health Protection Agency has issued guidance about when prophylaxis may be given. This is available here:

http://www.hpa.org.uk/web/HPAwebFile/HPAweb_C/1247038677052

It has also issued detailed prescribing guidance for oseltamivir (Tamiflu) and zanamivir (Relenza):

http://www.hpa.org.uk/web/HPAwebFile/HPAweb_C/1243581475043

Advice to GPs about antiviral collection updated

You can now use FP10 forms instead of the pre-printed swine flu treatment forms. This should make the process easier for you. Please note that you must strike through the FP10 form and endorse it with the words "No Payment AV".

In every case, you should fax the prescription form to the antiviral collection point and then phone to check that it has been received (numbers below). Please note that the FP10 can be used in antiviral collection points in neighbouring PCTs. You must include dosage instructions and in the case of children, their weight.

You must ensure the patient is given the signed original copy of the prescription to hand over to their flu friend (see below). If you have remotely assessed a patient you won't be able to give the prescription to the patient, but you should still fax the prescription form and then post the original to the antiviral collection point. If no fax nearby, you should at least phone the antiviral collection point.

If you have a face to face consultation with the patient, then once they have the FP10, they should be asked if they have a flu friend. A flu friend is a family member, friend or neighbour who can collect the prescription on their behalf. Please note that on no account should the patient collect the antiviral medicine themselves.

Antivirals will only be given to flu friends if they are able to produce a form of ID. That is their passport, driving licence or utility bill. ID is not required for the patient.

If you fax a prescription form outside of opening hours, you must tell the patient the opening hours of the collection point to enable their flu friend to collect their medication from 8am the next day.

Please note that the FP10 can be used in antiviral collection points in neighbouring PCTs.

Antivirals for children

We sent a letter to GPs which clarified the prescribing of Tamiflu for children. It is extremely important that you see this letter. If you are a GP and have not seen this, click here: <https://nww.devonpctinfo.nhs.uk/Prescribingpost>

Decision to admit or send to A&E updated

The Department of Health has issued detailed guidance on hospital admission criteria for adults and children, along with a referral form. This is available here:

http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_100941

If you refer a patient to accident and emergency please phone ahead to let the department know they are coming. Medical staff can then make the necessary arrangements to care for the patients.

Swine flu reporting

In line with the move to treatment-only the Health Protection Agency (HPA) is no longer providing daily updates on the number of confirmed cases. The HPA is instead issuing a weekly media alert covering the various surveillance systems to monitor the ongoing situation. This will also be available in the news section of the agency's website at www.hpa.org.uk.

Swine flu information sheet updated

After GP consultations some patients/flu friends will, quite naturally, have additional questions about swine flu.

We enclose a new (V3) swine flu information sheet that can be handed to patients/flu friends. These may be useful to both GPs and staff at the antiviral collection points. Please do use them.

We've updated the sheet with additional information for flu friends about being prepared to wait when they get to the antiviral collection point. This is in response to feedback from some sites.

Advice to community hospital staff

If a patient presents with flu-like symptoms, they should contact their GP or NHS Direct by phone in the first instance.

If a flu friend would like more information to take with them, please give them the swine flu information sheet (attached).

Advice to schools

Schools have now broken up for the summer holidays.

All schools were sent letters drafted by the Health Protection Agency in conjunction with Devon Primary Care Trust and Devon County Council.

These cover three scenarios: no cases at the school, one suspect case and an outbreak. All will be addressed from the head of the school/college affected and will be sent to parents.

Schools needing additional advice and information should call the Devon County Council helpdesk on 01392 383369.

Advice to nursing homes updated

Nursing homes in Devon will shortly receive additional information about swine flu via letter. New advice has been added to the Devon PCT website.

General advice line for health professionals

Since 2 July, when the treatment-only phase was announced, call volume to the South West Flu Response centre has dropped significantly.

In agreement with NHS South West, the centre will close at 5pm today.

This is in line with the position in other English regions.

Antiviral collection points updated

An antiviral collection point was set up in Barnstaple last week, in addition to the others already open.

The venues, mostly in community hospitals but also in other locations, are intended to be used by “flu friends” (see below) to collect antiviral medicines.

The antiviral collection points (below) are open from 8am to 6pm, seven days a week with the exception of Tiverton hospital which is open 24-hours and Barnstaple, which opens Monday to Friday.

The location of the antiviral collection points are based the latest available demographic data for the county. No one in Devon is more than 30 minutes away from a collection point.

Decisions to open additional sites are reviewed on a regular basis, taking into account the geographical spread of the virus.

At the moment the available evidence does not support opening further sites although this may change at short notice.

The numbers for Whipton and Totnes antiviral centres have been changed.

Please do not direct patients to the two walk-in centres in Exeter, GP surgeries or accident and emergency departments – unless it is clinically appropriate to do so.

Antiviral collection points:	Telephone:	Fax:
Honiton Community Hospital	01404 540540	01404 540550
Whipton Hospital	01392 208366	01392 208366
Exmouth Community Hospital	01395 279684	01395 224270
Tiverton Community Hospital	01884 235400	01884 235532
Newton Abbot Community Hospital	01626 324 500	01626 324701
Totnes Community Hospital	01803 862622	01803 869486
Tavistock Community Hospital	01822 612233	01822 610025
Bideford Community Hospital	01237 420200	01237 478036
Ilfracombe Tyrell Hospital	01271 863448	01271 864871

Lynton Resource Centre	01598 753310	01598 753832
Barnstaple Health Centre	01271 371761	01271 321686

Advice to GPs over where to collect prophylaxis doses

As of July 17 GPs following HPA guidance over prophylaxis should direct people needing the medicine (unless symptomatic) to one of the community pharmacies below. The sites have been chosen because they are close to antiviral collection points in Devon. No antiviral treatment doses are available from here.

Location	Pharmacy	Telephone number
Exeter	Sainsbury supermarket, Hillbarton Road, Pinhoe, Exeter	01392 469687
Honiton	Lloyds Pharmacy, Honiton Group Surgery, Marlpitts Road, Honiton	01404 469687
Exmouth	Clarepharm Pharmacy, Claremont Grove, Exmouth	01395 222878
Tiverton	Lloyds Pharmacy, Tiverton Hospital, Kennedy Way, Tiverton	01884 235400 and request
Newton Abbot	Boots Pharmacy, Albany Street, Newton Abbot	01626 363195
Totnes	Boots Pharmacy, Babbage Road, Totnes	01803 862356
Tavistock	Lake Pharmacy, West Street, Tavistock	01822 612104
Bideford	Lloyds Pharmacy, Abbotsham Road, Bideford	01237 472002
Ilfracombe	Lloyds Pharmacy, St Brannock's Road, Ilfracombe	01271 867524
Lynton	Lynton Pharmacy, Lynton	01598 753377
Barnstaple	Boots Pharmacy, High Street, Barnstaple	01271 326772

Help for people with no flu friend updated

The PCT has signed an agreement with the British Red Cross to provide a flu friend service for vulnerable people who would not otherwise be able to access antiviral medicines without it.

It is extremely important that the service is not misused as this could result in those in real need failing to receive their medication.

To arrange delivery patients in need should call 0845 331 3331. There is no charge but patients using the service should expect to wait up to 24-hours before the medicine is delivered.

Antivirals for staff

Antivirals are not routinely issued as a prophylaxis to staff.

Press and media

Media activity continues. If you are approached by the press to comment, please note that public messages are being coordinated by Devon PCT's communications department: 01392 267648 (day) and 07969 152217 (out of hours). GPs may also wish to call if they are approached to comment.

Media approach

We continue to push the key public health messages (see main messages to public below). We will not confirm individual cases or the location of antiviral collection points.

Posters and public information

A range of posters have been sent to NHS and partner organisations. If you would like copies, please contact lmogen.gray@nhs.net. Clearer swine flu antiviral collection point signs for all sites are on order. We will bring you more on this when we take delivery of the signs. As we enter the busy holiday period we are also working on information for visitors to the area. And a major public health information campaign to reassure and inform is being arranged in the South West. The campaign is expected to feature on radio, TV and in print media. More on this when we have more detail.

Human resources

Devon PCT human resources (HR) department is to collect information from permanent full-time staff to assess the potential impact of the pandemic on the workforce.

A letter will be going out over the next few days which asks staff to complete an online questionnaire by the July 31.

Not all staff have ready access to a computer, so paper copies of the questionnaire will be distributed with the letter.

Also included will be an occupational health form to identify staff with underlying medical conditions. This form should be completed and returned to your line manager.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the questionnaire, please contact Tim Robinson, assistant director of HR or Helen Belcher, HR advisor on 01392 449781.

Main messages to public

The following messages are designed to be used by all NHS bodies (and partner agencies). They may change if the pandemic becomes more severe.

They are split into three key themes:

- ✓ *Catch it, Bin it, Kill it*

CATCH IT: germs spread easily. Always carry tissues and use them to catch your cough or sneeze.

BIN IT: Germs can live for several hours on tissues. Dispose of them as soon as possible.

KILL IT: Hands can transfer germs to any surface you touch. Clean your hands as soon as you can.”

Anyone experiencing flu-like symptoms is advised to contact NHS Direct on 0845 46 47 in the first instance.

✓ *Main sources of information*

Most people in this country have been affected only mildly by the flu and this remains the position in Devon.

People are advised to call the swine flu information line 08001 513 513 or visit www.nhs.uk for general information.

People should only call NHS Direct 0845 46 47 or their GP if they have used these information sources first.

They should not attend walk-in centres, NHS hospitals or GP practices in person if they have symptoms.

✓ *Flu friends*

People may also consider setting up a network of flu friends (neighbours, friends or relatives who can help you if you get ill).

They could collect medicines, food and other supplies, so that the patient doesn't have to leave home.

General advice and back issues

We have transferred a great deal of general swine flu information to InfoPoint – the trust's internal website. You must have an InfoPoint username and password to view this. If you have mislaid these or wish to re-register, please contact howard.chapman@nhs.net

To view all current advice click here:

http://www.infopoint.devonpct.nhs.uk/your-sites/Directorates/Public_Health/Swine_Flu_response.asp

Next update

The next update will be published when there is anything significant to report.