



[Issue 4](#)

[6pm, May 1 2009](#)

Current situation

Eleven cases have now been confirmed in the UK, including the one in Torbay. The latest case was confirmed at 4.50pm today, as a child at a school in South Gloucestershire. First human to human transmission in Scotland confirmed at 4.20pm. UK cases expected to increase over the weekend.

There are no confirmed cases in the Devon PCT area and no new announcements are expected.

Patient algorithms have been updated again on the HPA website. There is also practical advice for investigating individuals with possible swine flu infection. Click here for these: <http://www.hpa.org.uk/web/HPAweb&HPAwebStandard/Page/1240732817665>

An important letter from the Local Medical Council to GPs updating them on the current situation is included.

Main message remains:

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.

Enquiries from the public:

If you receive an enquiry from a member of the public:

1. In the first instance, we would advise patients and the public to go online and visit NHS Choices for information and FAQs – www.nhs.uk. This content is continually refreshed with updates from national organisations including NHS Direct and the HPA and forms the most consistent and up to date knowledge and information on swine flu available online. There is also an online symptom checker on both www.nhs.uk and the NHS Direct website www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk where people, who are concerned that they've been affected by swine flu, can work through their symptoms and get information and advice.
2. Also, for those who require further information about swine flu, and in particular those who do not have internet access, should contact the National Swine Flu Information Line – 0800 1 513 513. This telephone line provides pre-recorded information and advice.

3. An alternative for patients and the public is to access NHS Direct's telephone service on 0845 4647. Callers will receive a welcome message which advises them what to do if they are calling about Swine Flu. Calls will be answered by trained health advisors. Where appropriate, callers will be transferred to nurse advisors who will use a specially developed algorithm to assess their condition and advise the most appropriate course of action.
4. The fourth line of enquiry for patients and the public is to contact their GP over the phone. Encouraging people to try other sources of advice and information first will hopefully help protect GP's time so that it can be channelled where it is most needed.

Clinical

There is no pandemic at this stage and there should be no general release of antivirals. Current indications are that this is milder than seasonal flu for which antivirals are not routinely issued. It is essential that GPs act as responsible "gatekeepers" and that antivirals are only issued where clinically appropriate as defined by the patient algorithms. These are changing frequently so make sure you are using the current version by following this link: <http://www.hpa.org.uk/web/HPAweb&HPAwebStandard/Page/1240732817665>

Please remember that patients with suspected swine 'flu should be notified to the Health Protection Unit on **01803 861 833** (Mon-Fri 9-5). At weekends or overnight, please call any acute hospital in our patch and ask to speak to the on-call public health professional.

STOP PRESS: NEW CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER GUIDANCE

Issued at 17:01 on 1 May: The Chief Medical Officer has released new guidance to replace that issued yesterday. This includes the new algorithm and clarifies some perceived ambiguities. The basic actions should follow those that are already in place for dealing with a potential pandemic.

A copy of the guidance and algorithm is included with this issue.

Clinical communications

This update is sent daily by email to practice managers. It is also posted on InfoPoint – the trust's internal website.

The contents of the update should be evaluated by a member of the practice management team and clinical staff to ensure key messages are shared with the right staff groups.

The update is the only official route for information from the PCT.

We, and as of today our colleagues in the health protection unit, are still receiving calls from GPs who have not read the swine flu update.

Please use your own networks to let colleagues know they must talk to their practice managers at once. This will make all the difference.

If after reading the swine flu update there are additional questions please email Elaine.leggett@nhs.net . Frequently asked questions will then be answered in the next update.

All practice managers were sent log on details to InfoPoint at launch in January 2008. However, if you anyone is experiencing problems accessing the site please email howard.chapman@nhs.net

Communications champions

We would like to express our thanks to people who volunteered to be communications champions. Owing to operational difficulties, however, we have decided that the nurse in charge of every shift at each hospital will take on this role.

If you have volunteered please stand down.

We have agreed the following protocol for people who act as communications champions:

1. All champions MUST log on to the following websites at least twice a day, before 11am and after 7pm.

<http://www.nhs.uk/NHSDirect/Pages/nhsdlanding.aspx>

<http://www.infopoint.devonpct.nhs.uk/>

2. Check email for latest swine flu update.

3. Give verbal updates on this information to every shift – and ensure that the latest swine flu update is pinned prominently to a dedicated area for this information. This must not be public-facing and will probably be a notice board in a staff room or kitchen.

Last season's vaccine

You should note that last season's vaccine is ineffective against the current strain of flu.

Antivirals

We are working on the allocation of antivirals and the issue is being progressed.

Antivirals will be distributed to the trust as per pandemic flu plan – at WHO level 6. There will be a further update when there is more to report.

Antivirals and staff and GP use

Health or social care workers will be offered post-exposure prophylaxis (protection) as per the HPA algorithm if they meet all the following criteria:

- a) They have provided clinical or personal care or who have examined a symptomatic patient and,
- b) They did not wear appropriate personal protective equipment and,
- c) The patient is confirmed to have flu A

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

The supply of PPE remains the responsibility of the employer. However, the PCT has made arrangements for a small supply of PPE to be made available to GPs calling at community hospitals. These should only be used if GPs do not have their own supplies. Each pack will contain two surgical masks, one plastic apron, one pair of gloves and one clinical waste bag and tie.

There is a right and a wrong way to use PPE and there is a poster you may find useful accompanying this issue and on the website www.devonpct.nhs.uk

Cleaning

Cleaning is being stepped up at all office workstations and hospitals in the PCT area.

Advice to patients

The advice remains the same. If NHS staff are contacted by patients with flu-like symptoms or concerned members of the public the advice is that they should contact NHS Direct by phone stating any travel history to affected areas. Patients should not attend hospital unless their clinical condition is likely to require admission.

If swine 'flu is suspected in a patient they must be isolated with respiratory precautions and any further assessment continued once those precautions are in place. The algorithm is changing frequently as new information becomes available, so please make sure you are using the current version by following this link:

<http://www.hpa.org.uk/web/HPAweb&HPAwebStandard/Page/1240732817665>

Please remember that patients with suspected swine 'flu should be notified to: the Health Protection Unit on **01803 861 833** (Mon-Fri 9-5). At weekends or overnight please call any acute hospital in our patch and request to speak to the on-call public health professional.

Enquiries from schools

Please refer all enquiries from schools to the Local Education Authority;
<mailto:melanie.wellard@devon.gov.uk> tel: 01392 382873.

PCT staff – your role

It is extremely important to check what your role would be should the situation become a pandemic. The PCT's pandemic 'flu plan has been placed on InfoPoint. All NHS staff should familiarise themselves the plan and also take 10-minutes to read the self-training programme here: http://www.infopoint.devonpct.nhs.uk/your-sites/Directorates/Human_Resources/Pandemic_Flu.asp

Workload prioritisation

If you or a colleague are requested to participate in 'flu planning activities please do your best to accommodate the request. The situation is moving rapidly and we need to ensure our response continues to quick and effective

Communications

The trust is operating a 24 hour on call communications service during the current outbreak.

In office hours call 01392 267648/267646

Out of office hours call 07969 152 217

If you are approached by the press please pass these numbers to them. Do not comment further. Anything you say can legitimately be used as official comment from the PCT.

Next issue of swine flu update

The planning team will be working on pandemic preparations over the weekend. We do not expect to produce another issue until Tuesday. However, if there are important updates or breaking news in Devon, we will of course review this position.

Press

The level of press enquiries to the trust reduced today. Dr Virginia Pearson, director of public health at the trust, continues to carry out media interviews.

Media are being targeted with key messages which are “we are well prepared” and “Catch it, bin it, kill it”.

“Prepared message” reinforced in third press release yesterday. Further press release will be sent today about advice to public over the bank holiday. See here for latest:

www.devonpct.nhs.uk

Website

High-profile pandemic flu area now established. New information added daily. Information for the independent care home sector has now been added www.devonpct.nhs.uk

Door-to-door leaflets

Pandemic flu leaflets will be issued to every household in the UK from next week. A mass media campaign began today. The main message continues to be one of continued good personal hygiene.

The leaflet is already available on the NHS Choices website. A link has been added to the website:

http://www.nhs.uk/news/2009/04April/Documents/Swine%20Flu%20Leaflet_Web%20Version.pdf

Posters

The trust has now taken delivery of an additional 5,000. These are being dispatched to schools, libraries and other public places today. A total of 500 posters will also be distributed to our own community hospitals and office bases.

E-versions of the posters are also available on the trust’s website for the public to print off and use.

The PCT is developing new posters for GP surgeries to direct patients with symptoms to NHS Direct. More on this soon.

Business continuity

Every department in the trust should now look at their business continuity plans in detail. This is an absolute priority.

Further Information

There are several sources of verified and accurate information. Staff should rely on these for factual information – not the media.

1. Infopoint <http://www.infopoint.devonpct.nhs.uk/home/> for the trust pandemic 'flu plan – insert pandemic flu in the search box for details.
2. World Health Organisation information:
<http://www.who.int/csr/disease/swineflu/en/index.html>
3. Health Protection Agency updates and information
 - For patients
http://www.hpa.org.uk/webw/HPAweb&HPAwebStandard/HPAweb_C/1240732817824?p=1240732817665
 - For NHS staff:
http://www.hpa.org.uk/webw/HPAweb&HPAwebStandard/HPAweb_C/1240732818131?p=1240732817665
 - For GPs:
http://www.bma.org.uk/health_promotion_ethics/influenza/index.jsp

A full list of FAQs are also available here and are being updated daily:
<http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Pandemic-flu/Pages/QA.aspx>.

Swine Flu: Public Question and Answers

The following questions are based on recurring enquiries from staff or GPs.

Q. Why is Swine Flu affecting humans?

Infection with swine influenza virus has been detected occasionally in humans since the 1950s and human disease is usually clinically similar to disease caused by infections with human influenza viruses.

Cases of swine influenza in humans usually occur after a history of exposure to pigs, i.e. direct or close contact with infected pigs. Person-to-person transmission, like cases currently under investigation in the US and Mexico, has been previously reported but appears to be rare.

Q. Will swine flu lead to a pandemic?

There are confirmed reports of human cases of swine flu worldwide, including the UK.

The World Health Organisation has raised their alert level to Phase 4. Phase 4 means that there has been verified human to human transmission of the virus.

However, although the NHS is being vigilant and is well prepared, it is too early to predict whether swine flu could ultimately result in a global pandemic and Phase 4 reflects that position.

Q. How prepared are we in Devon?

The UK was one of the first countries to have a flu pandemic contingency plan in place.

The UK plan seeks to reduce the negative health impact of any pandemic and the possible disruption it may cause to essential services and people's daily lives. This will be through measures such as antiviral treatment and immunisation (when this becomes available), and preparing the NHS and society as far as possible.

The NHS in Devon has taken a proactive approach, developing plans to provide an effective response locally to an influenza pandemic - reducing the impact on health, safeguarding essential services and minimising social disruption.

We are working closely with NHS South West and the Health Protection Agency to ensure we act on the latest information and with local partner organisations to ensure effective co-ordination

Q. What is the advice to people in Devon?

The NHS is advising people to adopt good hygiene practice as normal:

- Cover your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing, using a tissue whenever possible
- Dispose of dirty tissues promptly and carefully – bag and bin them
- Maintain good hygiene – washing hands frequently with soap and water

- Clean hard surfaces (e.g. kitchen worktops, door handles) frequently, using a normal cleaning product
- Stay at home when you are sick – if you have a cough and a fever, it is best to rest at home, take medicines to relieve the symptoms and drink plenty of fluids. This will speed your recovery and help prevent the spread of infection. If you need medical advice or assistance, phone NHS Direct on 0845 4647 or your GP surgery.

Q. What is the latest travel advice?

The Foreign Office is advising against all but essential travel to Mexico.

The Foreign Office have also said that British nationals resident in or visiting Mexico may wish to consider whether they should remain in Mexico at this time.

A special website <http://urgent.internationalsos.com> has the latest information and travel advice. This website will be continuously updated.

Q. Can swine flu be treated?

It is possible to treat human swine flu cases as the virus is sensitive to available antiviral drugs.

Antiviral drugs (such as Tamiflu) reduce the length of symptoms and usually their severity. Testing has shown that the human swine influenza H1N1 can be treated with these antivirals.

Q. What is the advice to people who have recently travelled to areas affected by swine flu (e.g. Mexico and the USA) and have developed flu like symptoms after returning home?

Anyone who has symptoms of influenza that have developed within 7 days of visiting an affected area should stay at home (to limit contact with others), and seek medical advice by contacting NHS Direct on **0845 46 47**.

The clinical symptoms of swine flu are similar to human seasonal flu and include fever (of 38 degrees or more) and flu like illness (2 or more of the following symptoms – cough, runny nose, limb/joint pain, headache).

The Health Protection Agency has produced guidance for healthcare professionals in the management of returning travellers and visitors from countries affected by swine fluA/H1N1 presenting with respiratory illness: recognition, investigation and initial management. This is available on the HPA website -

<http://www.hpa.org.uk/web/HPAweb&HPAwebStandard/Page/1240732817665>

Q. How will people suspected of having swine flu be treated?

As a precautionary measure some of those who are symptomatic may be referred for testing for a range of respiratory and other illnesses, in line with UK health guidance.

They will have a swab test taken (throat and nose) and this will be sent for testing. Treatment will be given if appropriate and this could include being given Tamiflu. Close contacts (e.g.

family members) of anyone confirmed as having swine flu could also be treated with Tamiflu after assessment.

Q. Has the NHS in Devon got good access to antiviral drug treatments?

The UK has antiviral stockpiles for the population that will be distributed to areas as needed.

Antivirals will be given to people if they become ill and require treatment. There are currently some local supplies and supplies will be increased if needed.

Q. Is Devon PCT supplying personal protective equipment (PPE) to the public?

There is no evidence of benefit to the general public for issuing personal protection equipment. The public should follow the advice given to 'Catch It, Bin it, Kill it' and maintain good personal hygiene. This has proven effectiveness.

Q. Will Devon PCT supply personal protective equipment to GPs and other frontline healthworkers?

The supply of personal protective equipment is the responsibility of each employer and will be issued in accordance with their employers arrangements.

Q. What information is being sent to GPs?

The swine flu update is the official PCT news source to GPs and NHS staff.

The briefings are distributed to all locations and it is the responsibility of managers to ensure their staff can access them. In locations where there is limited access, the use of communications champions to print off and pin up information may assist managers with this responsibility.

Q. Are district nurses expected to visit potential symptomatic patients at home to take swabs on behalf of GPs?

Swabbing of patients is done with guidance from the Health Protection Unit. Swabbing of patients should not be necessary when if a pandemic is declared.

Q. Are there any specific briefings or issues about services for children including education etc?

Guidance for schools has been issued by the Department for Education and Skills. Follow the link here: <http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/doc/13523/FullGuidance.pdf>

