



[Issue 8](#)

[5pm, May 8 2009](#)

## **Current situation updated**

There were a further five cases of swine flu confirmed in the UK today, all in the London area. This takes the total to 39. A further 426 cases are being investigated. There are no further confirmations in the Devon area and no new announcements are expected today.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) alert level remains at level 5 (of 6). This means that a worldwide flu pandemic is considered imminent. As of today total worldwide cases stand at 2,371.

Nationally, five schools remain closed as a result of confirmed cases, including the one in Torbay last week - and one in South Gloucestershire last week. Both schools in the South West are due to open again early next week.

At present no new clinical information has been added to the Health Protection Agency website but we continue to advise clinicians to visit the site regularly to check they have the very latest information. Click here for more:

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

Please note we are reviewing the communications requirement for future issues.

## **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, these are the options available:

**Option 1:** Visit the NHS Choices website ([www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)) for information and FAQs about swine flu. There is also an online flu symptom checker on both [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk) and the NHS Direct website ([www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk](http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk)).

**Option 2:** Ring the national swine flu information line (0800 1 513 513).

**Option 3:** Call the NHS Direct telephone service (0845 4647). Callers with flu-like symptoms, who have internet access, will be asked to try our online flu symptom checker first. If necessary, they will be able to

request a call back from an advisor. Otherwise callers are asked to hold to speak to someone who can help.

**Option 4:** Contact your GP over the phone.

### **Clinical updated**

Clinical information is being frequently updated by the Health Protection Agency, so to be well informed you need to keep checking their website by following this link:

<http://www.hpa.org.uk/web/HPAweb&Page&HPAwebAutoListName/Page/1240812234677>

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.

### **Advice on prophylaxis**

The chief medical officer issued additional advice on household contacts yesterday. To clarify, prophylaxis to close contacts must only be given when a positive flu 'A' result is received. Prophylaxis must not be given to contacts of a possible case before the result of their swab is known.

Please note there is still 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 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>

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### **GP practice pandemic planning package updated**

The trust has produced a planning package to help GPs prepare for the impact of pandemic flu on their practice. We sent it with issue 5 but are sending again to ensure wider use.

The package includes an easy-to-use spreadsheet to model potential workload and a practice flu plan template. The trust has produced guidance notes for both. The Local Medical Committee has endorsed the tools, so please take a minute or two to see how they can help you.

### **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.

There are feedback mechanisms already in place for GPs and other clinical staff but we have now made arrangements for this to become more formal. A feedback form will be regularly included.

Intelligence gathered from these will be fed into the swine flu coordination group and clarification over any issues given in future issues of swine flu update.

GPs should continue to liaise directly with the primary care team but we hope they may also find the feedback form useful.

### **Feedback updated**

We recognise that good communication is very important in this pre-pandemic phase and we will continue to update you through the swine flu update, website and email. But there is always a balance to be struck between informing and overloading. We have therefore made changes to the swine flu update to reflect this, such as posting FAQs and other important information on our website – and highlighting the latest updates. A GP today suggested that we use auto underline for specific updates. If you have a view on this or anything else let us know when we include the next feedback form.

### **InfoPoint registration**

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](mailto:howard.chapman@nhs.net)

Howard reports that there was a big increase in people wanting to log on to the site last week. Many people contacted him about resending lost or forgotten passwords.

### **Communications champions**

Nurses in charge of each shift are now fulfilling this role.

They should be working to the following protocol.

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.

## Email

Please be aware that this is a time of huge public interest in the NHS and that anything you write is potentially releasable under Freedom of Information legislation. You should also note that creating or forwarding emails containing inappropriate information may result in disciplinary action. Thanks for taking this issue seriously.

## Antivirals

We are working on the allocation of antivirals and the issue is progressing. Antivirals will be distributed at WHO level 6. More details will become available when or if necessary.

### Antivirals for staff and GP use **updated**

Devon PCT is expecting to take delivery of a large number of antivirals for staff use. More on this when we have it.

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

### Warfarin and antiviral use **updated**

We have been asked whether patients taking warfarin can take antivirals. The Health Protection Agency is not able to make individual prescribing decisions. This is something that a clinician has to do by a) making a full assessment of the patient and b) consulting the BNF.

### Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) **updated**

As a result of telephone calls from GPs we have made our own checks of the availability of PPE. While some smaller companies may be running low, we are assured that there are stocks of facemasks available elsewhere.

If your usual stockist is reporting problems, we'd suggest widening your search. The internet or a telephone directory may be as good a place to start as anywhere.

The following details may be useful:

a) <http://www.wms.co.uk/>

b) Hillcroft Surgery Supplies, Yeovil 01935 434526 fax: 01935 434826 email: [sales@hillcroftsupplies.com](mailto:sales@hillcroftsupplies.com)

c) <http://www.justgloves.co.uk/Disposable-Face-Masks.aspx?gclid=CM6YpP2TqpoCFeRM5QodRXWd2A>

Please note that the supply of PPE remains the responsibility of the employer. If you need to replenish your stock of PPE you MUST order it now. The PCT is not responsible for supplying this equipment.

The PCT has made arrangements for a limited supply of PPE equipment to be made available to GPs at community hospitals for use only in taking swabs safely. These should only be used if GPs do not have their own supplies. Each pack contains two surgical masks, one plastic apron, one pair of gloves and one clinical waste bag and tie.

### **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) use**

The chief medical officer's advice is that there is no requirement for the general public to wear facemasks as this has no proven benefit. However, healthcare staff should wear PPE in accordance with the HPA algorithm. This is because they will be dealing with people who might already be infected, therefore the risk to the clinician is greater.

You are reminded of the current advice from the Health Protection Agency in relation to mask use:

- Staff and GPs should attend all patients in accordance with normal procedures, and **in addition**
- When attending a possible case staff should wear a surgical mask, gloves and disposable plastic apron for assessment and should also give the patient a mask to wear
- When undertaking procedures which generate aerosols (suction, intubation, nebulisation, resuscitation) should use an FFP3 mask for possible, probable and confirmed cases.

### **Swab use updated**

The most recent advice from the Devon Health Protection Unit on swabbing patients being assessed for swine flu is to use two swabs, one for the nose and one for the throat.

If available, use a green-topped swab to swab the back of the nose and a red-topped swab to swab the back of the throat.

Where you do not have access to a green-topped swab please use a red-topped swab for swabbing the back of the nose.

Place both the nose swab and the throat swab in the viral transport medium in one red-topped tube (copan tube).

Having both swabs in the same red-topped tube maximises sensitivity.

### **Enquiries from schools**

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

New guidance has been added to the Health Protection Agency website. Click here for details:

[http://www.hpa.org.uk/web/HPAwebFile/HPAweb\\_C/1241180226578](http://www.hpa.org.uk/web/HPAwebFile/HPAweb_C/1241180226578)

## Human resources

We have written to recently-retired employees to enquire if they would be interested in helping out should the situation become a pandemic.

## 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 be quick and effective

## Communications

The trust is operating a 24-hour on call communications service during the current outbreak. This has now been extended to offer a [press briefing service for GPs](#). This is intended to ensure GPs have the very latest information should they be called to act as spokespeople by the media.

In office hours call 01392 267648, or 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. Do not put yourself at risk.

## Press updated

The communications department expect enquiries to pick up significantly when Paignton Community and Sports College re-opens on Monday, or if a case of swine flu is confirmed in the Devon PCT area. Managers are putting in place arrangements to deal with these – including drafting in support from other departments.

Key messages continue to be “we are well prepared” and “Catch it, bin it, kill it”.

## Website updated

The new flu line graphic and banner has been added to our website as has the local FAQs that was appended to the swine flu update:

<http://www.devonpct.nhs.uk/default.asp?pg=226>

There is also an easy to follow guide to swine flu:

<http://www.devonpct.nhs.uk/documents/flu/Easy%20Read%20Qand%20A%20with%20graphics%20to%20share.pdf> or go here for the website.

[www.devonpct.nhs.uk](http://www.devonpct.nhs.uk)

For the right audience, such as people with learning difficulties, this could be very useful. Our thanks to Torbay Care Trust for passing this on.

## Door-to-door leaflets updated

Pandemic flu leaflets are being delivered to every household in the UK from this week. Some have already been distributed in the Exeter area so if you haven't received one yet, expect it soon.

We've ordered further copies so that we can deliver these to those homeless and traveller communities who may not have a postcode. These are expected to arrive early next week and we'll get them delivered as soon as we can.

The mass media campaign continues with the main message of continued good personal hygiene.

The leaflet is available on the NHS Choices website:

[http://www.nhs.uk/news/2009/04April/Documents/Swine%20Flu%20Leaflet\\_Web%20Version.pdf](http://www.nhs.uk/news/2009/04April/Documents/Swine%20Flu%20Leaflet_Web%20Version.pdf)

The leaflet is also available in a range of alternative languages:

<http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Pandemic-flu/Pages/Otherlanguages.aspx>

and in large print:

[http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Pandemic-flu/Documents/SwineFlu\\_largeprint\\_acc.pdf](http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Pandemic-flu/Documents/SwineFlu_largeprint_acc.pdf)

and in audio: <http://www.nhs.uk/audio/Pages/medialibrary.aspx?Tag=Swine+flu+leaflet>

Sign language and easy read versions are being developed by the Department of Health. More on this when we have it.

## Posters

More than 4,000 "Catch it, bin it, kill it" have been sent to schools, libraries and other public places. About 500 were sent to acute hospitals in the county and Devon Partnership NHS Trust. The same number were sent 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 signpost patients with symptoms to NHS Direct. These will be sent to GPs as and when they are needed.

## Advice to employers

Useful information for employers has now been posted. Click here for more:

<http://www.businesslink.gov.uk/swineflu>

## Next issue updated

The next issue of swine flu update will be published by email on Monday, May 11. It is published as late as possible so as to include the very latest information from a range of sources.

We are reviewing the frequency of new issues because we feel you probably only need news of significant changes. Keep yourself updated using the links we have given you and rest assured we will let you know of anything significant to report.

## 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&Page&HPAwebAutoListName/Page/1240812233855?p=1240812233855>
- For NHS staff:  
<http://www.hpa.org.uk/web/HPAweb&Page&HPAwebAutoListName/Page/1240812234677>
- For GPs: [http://www.bma.org.uk/health\\_promotion\\_ethics/influenza/index.jsp](http://www.bma.org.uk/health_promotion_ethics/influenza/index.jsp)

### **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**

A list of local FAQs are available here:

<http://www.devonpct.nhs.uk/default.asp?pg=226>

A list of national FAQs are also available here

[:http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Pandemic-flu/Pages/QA.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Pandemic-flu/Pages/QA.aspx).

A list of international FAQs are available here:

[http://www.who.int/csr/disease/swineflu/frequently\\_asked\\_questions/en/index.html](http://www.who.int/csr/disease/swineflu/frequently_asked_questions/en/index.html)