



Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland

Dear parent/guardian

This letter aims to provide the most up to date information with regards to swine flu and to answer some questions you may have.

As you will be aware the numbers of people affected by swine flu in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland slowed over the summer.

For the majority of people swine flu continues to be a mild illness and most of those affected will recover at home with plenty of rest and the help of over-the-counter medicines like paracetamol.

The National Pandemic Flu Service continues to provide advice to those with swine flu and to authorise antivirals for those who need them. Antivirals are not a cure for swine flu but they can reduce the length of time people are ill and help avoid complications like developing pneumonia.

It is likely there will be a 'second wave' of swine flu this autumn and we will see numbers of those contracting the illness increase once more. With this in mind it is important parents can spot the signs of swine flu and give their children the right care if necessary.

There is no need to be alarmed by swine flu but we know all parents will want to be prepared to nurse their youngster through any symptoms and to know where to get further advice and help.

It is unlikely that schools or childcare settings will close due to swine flu but please be aware that children will be sent home if they develop flu-like symptoms. It is advisable to check the school or setting has your correct contact details.

Please read the frequently asked questions we have put together to help respond to any concerns you may have.

If you would like further information visit the NHS Choices website at www.nhs.uk or call the swine flu information line on 0800 1 513 513.

Kind regards

Dr Peter Marks, Flu Director, NHS Leicestershire and Rutland
Karen Tiller, Flu Director, NHS Leicester City
Cathy Mallaghan, Flu Director for HPA East Midlands.



Information for parents and guardians

The NHS in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland has produced these frequently asked questions to share information relating to swine flu. For more information call the swine flu information line on 0800 1 513 513 or visit www.nhs.uk

Q. What is swine flu?

A. The symptoms of swine flu are similar to those of seasonal flu and include a fever (a temperature typically of 38C), tiredness, lack of appetite, coughing, a sore throat and a runny nose. Swine flu can last for seven days but most people experience symptoms for two to five days.

Q. What is the difference between swine flu and seasonal flu?

A. Seasonal flu happens every year and in the UK flu season is during autumn and winter. Swine flu is a new form of flu which means none of us have immunity to it and everyone is at risk of catching the virus. Flu pandemics are rarer than seasonal flu with just three pandemics in the last century.

Q. How can I protect my child from swine flu?

A. Simple hand washing is the best way to stop germs and illness from spreading. Illnesses are passed easily between children because they find it hard to practice hand hygiene. Remember to encourage your child to CATCH IT, BIN IT, KILL IT. Always catch coughs or sneezes in a tissue, dispose of the tissue as soon as you can then wash your hands. The flu virus can survive on hard surfaces so clean worktops and door handles regularly with normal cleaning products.

Q. What should I do if I think my child has swine flu?

A. Symptoms of swine flu are mild for most people, including most children. If you suspect your child has swine flu use the National Pandemic Flu Service. They will be able to assess you and tell you where to get antivirals if needed. Call 0800 1 513 100 for an assessment, or go online at www.direct.gov.uk/pandemicflu

Fever is a common swine flu symptom and can make a child uncomfortable and irritable. The following may help:

- Give a child paracetamol or ibuprofen to lower their temperature. You can buy them in liquid form for children. Read the instructions carefully.
- Make sure a child is wearing light clothes or remove them if the room is at normal 'room temperature'. Do not 'cold-sponge' a child who has a fever or put them in a cold bath as this can make their condition worse. It is also not advisable to wrap up a child to try and 'sweat out' fever. Open a window slightly to ensure a gentle flow of fresh air to reduce overheating.
- Encourage your child to have plenty to drink if they have a fever so they do not become dehydrated. Signs of dehydration include: a dry mouth, no tears, sunken eyes, drowsiness, and generally becoming more unwell. Seek medical help if you suspect your child is becoming dehydrated.

Q. What are antivirals?

Antivirals are not a cure for swine flu but they will relieve some of the symptoms, reduce the length of time patients are ill by around one day and reduce the potential for serious complications, such as pneumonia.

Q. Are antivirals safe for children?

A. Antivirals are safe for children and babies. If your child needs antivirals they will be given an appropriate dose. It is important to note that antivirals, like any medicine, may have side-effects. Make sure you read and understand the instructions.

Swine flu vaccination**Q. When can I/my child get the vaccine?**

A. Based on the latest available information the vaccine could be licensed by early October. The first people could receive the vaccine from the middle of October.

Q. Is there enough vaccine for everyone?

A. The NHS should receive enough vaccine for 30 million people, about half the population, by the end of this year. Not all of the vaccine will arrive at once, so we need to prioritise those who need it most. People at greater risk of becoming more seriously ill from swine flu will be given it first. Further supplies of the vaccine will arrive next year.

Q. Who gets the vaccine first?

A. People who are most likely to experience complications from swine flu will be vaccinated first. These groups are, in order of priority:

1. People between six months and 65 years old who usually get the seasonal flu jab;
2. Pregnant women (please note it will depend on licensing conditions at what stage of pregnancy the vaccine will be given);
3. People who live with those whose immune systems are compromised, such as cancer patients or those with HIV/AIDS;
4. People aged 65 and over in the current seasonal flu vaccine clinical at-risk groups.

Frontline health and social care workers will also be offered the vaccine because they are both at an increased risk of catching swine flu and of spreading it to at-risk patients. Find out more about the priority groups at www.nhs.uk
If you are a member of a priority group your GP will invite you to have the vaccine.

Q. Why are children not included in the priority groups?

A. If a child has an underlying health condition and usually has the seasonal flu jab they will receive the vaccine against swine flu. It is important we prioritise those who need the vaccine most and evidence does not identify otherwise healthy children as the most at-risk.

Q. I'm worried about swine flu but I'm not in one of these groups...

A. People in these groups are most likely to experience complications. Most other people will have mild symptoms.

Q. Is it compulsory to be vaccinated?

A. No. However, we would strongly urge those in the at-risk groups to have it. As with all vaccines it is up to the individual to decide if they, or children in their care, take it up or not.

Q. Will the vaccine give me swine flu?

A. No, it will not carry the 'live' virus so it cannot give you swine flu.