

## Swine Flu – Advice for Employees

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has declared that the UK is in Phase 6 of the swine flu pandemic, that is; the virus is now uncontrollable and infection widespread. By the middle of October it is predicted that there will be 100,000 new cases every day and 30% of the population are likely to contract the disease at some stage.

As part of our Health and Safety Policy, we are introducing the following guidelines to ensure that all of our employees are informed about the health risks associated with swine flu, take correct precautions to avoid contracting and spreading the virus and recognise the symptoms of swine flu.

The pandemic situation is continually changing and employees are strongly recommended to remain aware of national and regional advice. By following the advice listed below we can prevent the unwanted spread and impact of swine flu on ourselves and the business.

Thank you all for your co-operation and understanding.

### **Hygiene Precautions – simple steps to prevent excess spread of the virus**

- Carry tissues with you and use a clean tissue to cover your nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing.
- Dispose of tissues promptly, after one use in domestic waste and then wash your hands thoroughly.
- Individuals should not use cloth handkerchiefs or re-use tissues – this may lead to pockets or handbags being contaminated which may then re-contaminate hands.
- Employees should frequently wash their hands with soap and hot water. Handrubs and alcohol-based hand sanitisers are a very good alternative.
- Employees should especially wash their hands after coughing, sneezing or using a tissue.
- Individuals should minimise touching of the mouth, eyes and/or nose.
- Individuals should wash their hands as soon as they get to work and when they arrive at home.
- Employees should avoid close contact and heavily populated gatherings where possible (such as sporting events or concerts).

As an organisation we will ensure that communal work areas, light switches, door handles and telephone receivers are regularly cleaned with hot water and soap. Employees are also asked to take responsibility for their own work station, paying particular attention to their keyboard and telephone receiver.

Staff who develop symptoms at work will be accommodated into a designated 'isolation room' until arrangements can be made to take them home. This room will be thoroughly decontaminated and precautions will be introduced for all those entering or leaving this room.

## The Symptoms of Swine Flu

- A specific characteristic of swine flu is the **sudden onset** of a fever, cough and a shortness of breath.
- Other symptoms of swine flu are the same as seasonal flu, including; headache, fatigue, aching muscles, sore throat, sneezing, chills, runny nose, loss of appetite.
- Employees who believe that they may have swine flu can check their symptoms with an online flu checker at: [www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk](http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk)
- Alternatively individuals can call the swine flu information line on 0800 1513 513 or NHS Direct on 0845 4647
- Employees should not go to A&E or their GP's surgery unless they are seriously unwell
- **If you are diagnosed with swine flu or believe that you have swine flu – Do NOT come to work until you are symptom free.**
- **Contact your line manager as soon as possible to advise them of your condition. Normal absence reporting procedures should then be followed.**
- Your GP will give you a voucher reference entitling you to anti-viral medication. You should arrange for a healthy friend or relative to pick this up for you from a designated collection point.

Employees are reminded that in the overwhelming majority of cases, swine flu is a relatively mild illness. If you contract swine flu, you should:

- **Stay at home and rest**
- **Take medicines such as aspirin, paracetamol or ibuprofen**
- **Drink plenty of fluids**

## What should I do if I have made contact with an infected person?

If you believe that you may have been in contact with someone who has contracted swine flu then you must contact your line manager as soon as possible. Under normal circumstances you will be required to continue working unless you begin to display the symptoms yourself.

If you work in close contact with someone who is particularly vulnerable to infections, then you should immediately inform your line manager, who will decide whether or not you should stay away from work.

## Return to Work Procedures

If your line manager has decided that you should stay away from work for some reason connected to the pandemic, then you should not return until authorised by your line manager. You may be required to get a fitness-to-work certificate from a doctor before returning to work.

The company will attempt to put in reasonably practicable steps to allow employees who cannot come into work to work from home.