

H1N1 Influenza 09 (Human Swine Influenza) –

Key Points for all Children's services

Last updated: 4 June 2009

A new influenza virus that spreads between people has recently been identified. This influenza is called human swine influenza, because it is derived from an influenza virus that normally infects pigs. The situation is rapidly evolving.

Children's services include: long day care and occasional care child care centres, preschools, mobile children's services, family day care and homed based care, and outside school hours care.

These messages also apply to playgroups and outside school hours care services.

What is swine influenza (swine flu)?

Swine influenza (swine flu) is a respiratory disease of pigs caused by a type A influenza virus. Swine flu viruses do not normally infect humans, however, human infections with swine flu have occurred in the past, and cases of human-to-human spread of a swine flu-like virus have been recently confirmed in several countries.

For more information about the disease please see our Human Swine Influenza Fact Sheet (available at www.health.nsw.gov.au)

Who is at risk

Anyone returning from an area where the disease is spreading quickly may be at risk.

People who have been in close contact with those who are known to have the disease may also be at increased risk of contracting the disease.

To date, the virus has not caused widespread outbreaks in child care centres in countries where the infection is established, unlike schools. Currently there is **no recommendation to exclude children who are well** and who are not known to be close contacts of a confirmed case from children's services.

What are the symptoms?

The symptoms of swine influenza are similar to seasonal influenza (fever, cough, tiredness, muscle aches, sore throat, chills, shortness of breath, runny nose, headache). Some cases of human swine influenza have also complained of vomiting and diarrhoea. Symptoms generally appear between two to four days after exposure.

Controlling the Spread of Infection

As carers of young children, child care centres usually already have excellent infection control practices in place. When attempting to control the spread of influenza, the same steps that are normally taken should be followed.

If any child develops influenza like symptoms, separate them from the other children and contact their parents immediately to pick them up from the service and to keep them home until they are well. The parents can call their GP for further advice.

With winter approaching, staff and children need to be encouraged to continue to take appropriate precautions: cover mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing and wash hands regularly, including after contact with soiled tissues, after blowing their nose or coughing, before eating, and after going to the toilet or changing a nappy. If staff or children are sick with an influenza-like illness, they should be advised to stay at home and limit contact with other people to avoid infecting them.

If a children's service notices an unusually high number of absences due to illness, particularly influenza-like-illnesses, or has a confirmed case of a child, family member, or staff member contracting the influenza, they should notify their local public health unit immediately.

Should children returning from areas where the disease is spreading quickly be excluded?

Currently there is no recommendation that children under school age who are well should be excluded from children's services, unless they are likely to mix extensively with school aged children during the day.

Health authorities advise that while schools have been sources of community transmission, children's services have not been found to be sources of transmission - that is why different actions need to be taken for the different settings.

Will children's services be closed?

If a confirmed case of human swine influenza attends a children's service whilst they are infectious, a risk assessment will be undertaken by public health authorities to determine whether action will be taken around the child's closest contacts and carers or more broadly in the children's service.

Reassuring Children

Young children often need reassurance when there is concern about an issue in the community. They may misunderstand what is happening and become anxious. It is important for staff and parents to listen closely to what children are asking or saying, and think about whether they are looking for factual information, or if the questions are expressing anxiety about human swine influenza. They need to know that adults understand how they feel and are able to keep them safe.

Adults need to be conscious of the presence of children when discussing the illness. It is a good idea not to let children overhear adult conversations about worrying things when they are too young to be able to join in.

For More information:

Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing swine influenza information hotline 1802007

NSW Health human swine influenza information: www.health.nsw.gov.au/publichealth/swine_flu.asp

Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing – Health Emergency website
www.healthemergency.gov.au/internet/healthemergency/publishing.nsf/Content/home-1

Staying Healthy in Child Care

www.nhmrc.gov.au/publications/synopses/ch43syn.htm

Travel Advice (Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade):

www.smarttraveller.gov.au/zw-cgi/view/TravelBulletins/Health-Swine_Influenza

Further information – Public Health Units in NSW						
For more information please contact your doctor, local public health unit or community health centre – look under <i>NSW Government</i> at the front of the White Pages.						
Metropolitan Areas			Rural Areas			
Northern Sydney / Central Coast	Hornsby	02 9477 9400	Greater Southern	Goulburn	02 4824 1837	
	Gosford	02 4349 4845		Albury	02 6080 8900	
South Eastern Sydney / Illawarra	Randwick	02 9382 8333	Greater Western	Broken Hill	08 8080 1499	
	Wollongong	02 4221 6700		Dubbo	02 6841 5569	
Sydney South West	Camperdown	02 9515 9420	Hunter / New England	Bathurst	02 6339 5601	
	Liverpool	02 9515 9420		Newcastle	02 4924 6477	
Sydney West	Penrith	02 4734 2022	North Coast	Tamworth	02 6767 8630	
	Parramatta	02 9840 3603		Port Macquarie	02 6588 2750	
Justice Health Service	Matraville	02 9311 2707		Lismore	02 6620 7500	
NSW Department of Health	Nth Sydney	02 9391 9000				
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