

SWINE FLU – Q&A for *Parentzone* – 24 June 2009

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q What can I do to help?

Help your childminder, nursery, pre-school group, school or out-of-school club by making sure that they have your up-to-date contact details – your address, phone number (home, work and mobile) and e-mail details as appropriate. They will need to get in touch if there is a case of swine flu confirmed among the children or staff and they suspect that children may be at risk.

Q What should I do if my child (or indeed anyone else in the household) shows any signs of flu-like illness?

If your child is unwell and you are concerned about their health you should contact your local GP or NHS24 (0845 242424) for advice.

You should keep them at home and not send them to school, nursery, childcare organisation or summer activity. You should also inform the school, nursery, childcare organisation or summer activity organiser.

Q Is hand-washing and the use of tissues important?

Yes, very, and as much in the home as in the school or nursery. The advice in the leaflet you received through your letterbox recently should be followed. Frequent hand-washing and use of tissues to cover coughs and sneezes is very important in helping to slow the spread of swine flu among children and young people because they are so much more likely than others to catch and spread it.

CLOSURES & ATTENDANCE

Q Why have schools and nurseries been closing?

To try to contain and slow down the spread of swine flu. Children and young people are 4 times as likely as the general population to catch swine flu, and when they have it they are more likely to pass it on.

Q What happens if a pupil or staff member at the school or nursery is suspected of having, or has swine flu?

If this happens, the education and health authorities will liaise very closely and decide what is the appropriate action to take. This may or may not involve temporary closure of part or all of the school or nursery.

Letters from the local NHS will explain to parents and pupils what is happening, whether or not Tamiflu anti-viral treatment is being offered, and why.

Where the flu is already spreading in the local community the authorities may decide against closing the school or nursery.

Q What are my rights as a parent to keep my child off school or nursery if I am concerned?

If your child is at school and the school remains open, your normal responsibility to send your child to school still applies.

Contact the school though and discuss your concerns with them.

Q Are alternative arrangements being made for childcare if schools or nurseries are closed?

No, because the main reason for closures is to reduce the spread of infection by closing places where children come together in groups.

SUMMER CAMPS, ACTIVITIES, EVENTS ETC

Q What about camps, play schemes and other organised events and activities over the summer holidays that my child will be attending?

Do not change any plans you already have, although you may wish to check in advance with the organisers. The health authorities will be keeping a very close watch on the flu situation over the summer and will be liaising closely with the organisers of summer activities and events.

A SWINE FLU VACCINE

Q I have heard about a vaccine against swine flu? Will my child receive it and when?

A vaccine is being developed against swine flu and the Government intends to run a vaccination programme for the whole population. The timing will depend on how quickly the vaccine can be manufactured and distributed. It is not yet possible to say when it will begin or which groups of people will be vaccinated first. Further information will be available in the autumn.

FOREIGN TRAVEL

Q I have a foreign holiday planned over the summer – is it safe to travel?

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office's website has the most up to date and detailed advice about travelling overseas – www.fco.gov.uk/en/travelling-and-living-overseas/swine-flu