

GARSWOOD SURGERY

PATIENT INFORMATION LEAFLET

RECOGNISING THE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF FLU AND DEALING WITH PANDEMIC FLU

IMPORTANT – Please read the entire leaflet

Useful websites:
UK Department of Health - www.dh.gov.uk
UK National Health Service (NHS) - www.nhs.uk
Patient UK – <http://news.patient.co.uk>
NHS Direct - www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk
Garswood Surgery - www.garswoodsurgery.co.uk

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN SEASONAL AND PANDEMIC FLU	
Seasonal Flu	Pandemic Flu
<p>Caused by influenza viruses that are similar to those already affecting people.</p>	<p>Caused by a new influenza virus that people have not been exposed to before. Likely to be more severe, affect more people, and cause more deaths than seasonal flu because people will not have immunity to the new virus.</p>
<p>Symptoms include fever, cough, runny nose, and muscle pain. Deaths can be caused by complications such as pneumonia.</p> <p>Healthy adults are usually not at risk for serious complications (the very young, the elderly, and those with certain underlying health conditions have increased risk for serious complications).</p>	<p>Symptoms similar to the common flu may be more severe and complications more serious.</p> <p>Healthy adults may also be at increased risk for serious complications.</p>
<p>Generally causes modest impact on society (e.g., some school closings, encouragement of people who are sick to stay home).</p>	<p>A severe pandemic could change the patterns of daily life for some time. People may choose to stay home to keep away from others who are sick. Also, people may need to stay home to care for ill family and loved ones. Travel and public gatherings could be limited. Basic services and access to supplies could be disrupted.</p>

During a pandemic flu outbreak, it is extremely important to take precautions in your own home to prevent its spread. These precautions include:

- Practicing good hand hygiene.
- Ensuring that household members stay home if they show signs and symptoms of the flu and avoiding contact with others.
- Disinfecting surfaces that might harbour germs when a household member has the flu.
- Following advice supplied through the NHS and the Department of Health

PREVENTING THE SPREAD OF FLU

The good news is that germs are easily washed away.

These healthy habits will help keep you and others from getting and passing on the virus:

- Clean your hands often with soap and water or alcohol-based hand Sanitiser (readily available from chemists and supermarkets)
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze and clean your hands afterwards. Put used tissues in a rubbish bin – don't leave them lying around
- Cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve if you don't have a tissue
- Keep your hands away from your eyes, nose and mouth to keep flu germs from entering your body

Anyone with signs and symptoms of the flu during a flu pandemic should stay home from work or school and avoid contact with others. The flu virus is spread through contaminated droplets that exit the mouth and nose of a person who has the flu. When someone with the flu coughs or sneezes, the virus can get in the air directly around them (within three feet), on objects near them and their hands. People may get the flu when they breathe in droplets from the air or when they touch people or objects that are contaminated and then touch their own mouth, eyes, or nose.

Washing Away Germs When a Household Member Is Sick

The most important step that everyone should take to protect household members who are not ill in the home is for every member to clean their hands often.

Caregivers should always clean their hands before and immediately after contact with a person with the flu.

They should also clean them:

- After coughing or sneezing;
- Before, during, and after preparing food;
- Before eating, and after using the bathroom;
- After handling rubbish bins or animal waste;
- When coming into the home from public places

Follow these steps for proper hand hygiene:

1. Wet hands with warm, running water and apply liquid soap.
2. Rub hands vigorously for at least 20 seconds, covering all surfaces and fingers.
3. Scrub nails by rubbing them against the palms of your hands.
4. Rinse your hands with water.
5. Dry your hands thoroughly with kitchen roll and use it to turn off the tap.
6. Apply alcohol-based hand cleaner and rub it in well.

Disinfecting at home when a household member has pandemic flu :

Disinfect door knobs, switches, handles, toys and any surfaces that are commonly touched around the home or workplace. Use an household disinfectant, and anti-viral disinfectant spray such as Dettol or a fresh mixture of one-quarter cup bleach with one gallon of water, or if you need a smaller quantity use one tablespoon of bleach in one quart of water (always read the directions when using bleach as it can discolour fabrics and carpets, etc)

Clean dishes in the dishwasher. If you wash dishes by hand in your home use very hot water and put a little bleach in the rinse water to disinfect them – approx 250ml for every 4 litres of clean water (60ml per litre) or use something like Milton sterilising tablets

Wash your hands after handling dirty laundry. It is okay to wash everyone's clothes together.

Wear disposable gloves (available from chemists and supermarkets) when in contact with or cleaning body fluids. Clean up with paper towels and dispose of them in the outside bin.

Keep everyone's personal items separate. When a household member has the signs and symptoms of the flu, all members of the household should avoid sharing computers, pens, papers, clothes, towels, sheets, blankets, food or eating utensils.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Should I wear a surgical mask if I am caring for someone who has the flu?

A. Once a flu virus is airborne, it is not easily filtered out of the air by a surgical mask. Caregivers may wear a mask, if they choose, however, the person who actually has the flu would be better to wear a surgical mask because it can effectively stop germs before they become airborne. You can purchase surgical masks from some chemists and on-line

Q. Should I wear a mask when I am out in public, especially if I am using public transport, such as buses, trains or airplanes?

A. Wearing a mask in public would help protect others if you have the flu yourself, however, it is not known whether it will protect you from getting the flu.

Q. When I'm providing care do I need a gown or other personal protective equipment like health professionals use?

A. It is not known at this time if that will be necessary. Check the Department of Health and NHS websites who will provide up to date infection control recommendations for the home.

Q. Where can I obtain surgical masks?

A. You can purchase surgical masks from some chemists or the internet.

Q. If everyone in my household is vaccinated against the seasonal flu, will we be protected against a pandemic flu?

A. No, the seasonal flu jab won't protect you against pandemic influenza. During the seasonal flu periods, a seasonal flu vaccine is routinely offered to those who suffer from chronic diseases such as diabetes, respiratory diseases, stroke, etc as it can help them to stay healthy. You can however have a **pneumonia** shot to prevent this secondary infection if you are over the age of 65.

Q. Is it possible to get pandemic flu from eating pork or poultry?

Cooking destroys germs, including the flu virus. Guidelines for the safe preparation of meat and poultry include the following and should be followed routinely – regardless of flu:

- Wash hands before and after handling food.
- Keep raw meat and poultry and their juices away from other foods.
- Keep hands, utensils, and surfaces, such as cutting boards, clean.
- Ideally use a food thermometer to ensure meat and poultry have been fully cooked.

MONITORING A PERSON WHO HAS THE PANDEMIC FLU

It is useful to keep a **care log**. At least every four hours or when signs and symptoms change, write down the date, time, temperature, symptoms, and type and dosage of any medications given.

Have your care log handy when you talk with your doctor. A care log will enable you to give more accurate and meaningful information on the patient's condition .

CARING FOR SOMEONE WHO HAS THE PANDEMIC FLU

A normal fit and healthy person will rarely require any treatment from their doctor. Since the flu is caused by a virus, antibiotics, such as penicillin, will not cure it. **Do not come to the surgery if you, or a member of your family, believe you may have pandemic flu.** Explain the symptoms to a receptionist over the telephone and she will arrange for a doctor to call you back, and possibly visit you. If they recommend you have anti-viral treatment (Tamiflu, etc) they will explain how you may obtain this.

It is very important that you do not come into surgery and ideally you should remain indoors as you risk spreading the infection to those who may be suffering from chronic diseases or other ailments which have reduced their ability to fight the virus.

If you have the signs and symptoms of the flu during a pandemic you should minimise the spread of infection by taking the following action

- Stay at home;
- Get lots of rest;
- Drink plenty of liquids to prevent dehydration;
- Avoid alcohol and tobacco;
- Take medications to reduce a fever and relieve flu symptoms;
- For general advice Contact NHS Direct.

WHAT TO DO IF A FLU SUFFERER'S CONDITION DETERIORATES

Telephone the practice if the flu sufferer has the following signs and symptoms:

- High fever;
- Greater than 105° F (40.5° C) for an adult or child
- 103° F (39.4° C) or higher for a baby three to 24 months old
- Rectal temperature of 100.4° F (38° C) or higher for a baby up to three months old
- Shaking chills;
- Coughing that produces thick, yellowish-greenish coloured mucus;
- Dehydration (feeling of dry mouth or excessive thirst) often accompanied by dry cracked lips;

- Worsening of an existing serious medical condition (such as, heart or lung disease, diabetes, or cancer).

Dial 999 if the patient has signs and symptoms of the flu plus any of these additional worrisome signals:

- Irritability;
- Confusion;
- Difficulty breathing or chest pain with each breath;
- Bluish skin;
- Stiff neck;
- Inability to move an arm or leg;
- First-time seizure.

Prevent Dehydration

With the flu, dehydration occurs when the body loses too much water and it is not replaced quickly enough. It can be serious. To avoid dehydration, give soothing drinks at the first signs of the flu. Also give light, easily-digested foods, such as soup and broth.

In the case of a fever, diarrhoea or vomiting, you can give fluids that contain electrolytes (available from chemists and supermarkets).

If drinking liquids makes nausea worse, take small sips of fluids regularly

Reduce a Fever

Follow these care steps to help lower a fever:

- Give plenty of fluids to help prevent dehydration. Not getting enough water when you have the flu can cause serious health complications.
- Give fever-reducing medication, such as paracetamol, or ibuprofen, always follow the directions. Do not give aspirin to anyone younger than 20.
- Keep a record of temperature in a care log.
- To make the patient more comfortable when a fever is high give a sponge bath with lukewarm water.
- If the patient's condition deteriorates contact your doctor or a health professional by phone and let him or her know what care you are giving (see above).

PREPARE FOR A FLU PANDEMIC

It is a good idea to develop a **Family Flu Plan**. Your plan should include how your family members will cope if schools are closed, or if they cannot go to work or to any public gathering or if shops and petrol stations are closed and if you are a carer, provision for the cared for person will need to be considered. Nominate a **Flu Friend** to help with collecting medicines, etc

CONCLUSION

Everyone should be aware of the evolving situation, however, please remember, the media is not a good source of information as they are notorious for sensational reporting.

Always follow the advice from the Department of Health and the NHS.