

Medical guidance notes and information

Swine flu

For the latest information and updates, please refer to the page linked below on Source:

- <http://source.tfl/DoingMyJob/HealthSafetyEnvironment/9915.aspx> (opens in a new window)
- <http://source.tfl/News/CorporateNews/10291.aspx> (opens in a new window)

The latest TfL bulletin is linked below:

Medical Questions and Answers for Managers - Published 22September 2009

What are the symptoms of swine flu?

The NHS says: "Fever or high temperature (over 38°C/100.4°F) and two or more of the following symptoms: unusual tiredness, headache, runny nose, sore throat, shortness of breath or cough, loss of appetite, aching muscles, diarrhoea or vomiting."

What is the incubation period for swine flu?

The incubation period (the time between being exposed to infection and showing first symptoms) is 2-5 days and is usually 2-3 days.

How long does an individual remain infectious after they caught the flu?

An individual will be most infectious when symptoms first appear. They can still spread the virus for up to 5 days after symptoms appear but become less infectious as symptoms subside.

When are people most infectious?

People are most infectious to others **soon** after they develop symptoms, although they continue to shed the virus (for example, in coughs and sneezes) for up to five days (seven days in children). People become less infectious as their symptoms subside, and once their symptoms are gone, they are no longer considered infectious to others.

An employee has been identified as having swine flu, what should I do?

If employee is at work they should be sent home. If at home they should stay home until recovered. Employee should keep manager informed. Occupational Health do not need to be informed unless there are ongoing health problems on return to work.

An employee has reported symptoms such as a cough and headache, but says they are fit enough for work, what should I do? What advice should I give an employee if they have some symptoms?

- If employee feels well they should come to work.
- If employee has flu like symptoms - high temperature, sore throat or cough they should stay at home, check their symptoms on NHS flu line and if still concerned phone NHS Direct or GP.

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- If employee develops flu like symptoms at work they should be sent home, follow advice above and keep manager informed.

Can Occupational Health find out whether a member of my team definitely has been diagnosed as having swine flu?

No. It is the GP and employee themselves who will have this information.

Close family member who is suspected of/confirmed as having swine flu. My employee's partner/child has been diagnosed with swine flu. They do not need to stay home to look after them, but should I encourage them to stay off work as they could spread the virus to colleagues? My employee is concerned about having come into contact with swine flu through friends, colleagues or their child's school. What should I advise them to do?

- If employee feels well they should come to work.
- If employee has flu like symptoms - high temperature, sore throat or cough they should stay at home, check their symptoms on NHS flu line and if still concerned phone NHS Direct or GP
- If employee develops flu like symptoms at work they should be sent home, follow advice above and keep manager informed.

Will my employees who get flu need a medical examination before returning to work after contracting flu? Will Occupational Health run Return to Work Assessment Clinics for people returning to work after recovering from flu?

OH does not need to be informed unless there are ongoing health problems on return to work. OH will then advise if an appointment is required.

If a member of my team has a cold, should they stay at home in case it develops into flu? Some of my team have colds, are they putting the rest of the team at risk by continuing to work? What should I advise them to do?

If member of staff has mild cold symptoms - no high temperature and feels reasonably well, they should come to work, take medication to alleviate symptoms and follow good personal hygiene.

What advice should I give my staff on reducing their risk of getting swine flu? How can I reduce my risk and protect my team?

Swine flu is spread in the same way as seasonal 'flu by coughing and sneezing. Risks can be reduced by following good personal hygiene:

- Always carry tissues and use to cover the mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing.
- Dispose of the tissue in a bin as soon as possible.
- Do not use a fabric handkerchief or reuse tissue.
- Wash hands regularly with soap and water especially before eating or touching the face.

What advice is there on travelling on public transport? My team works on the front line – are they more at risk by being in contact with passengers? What can they do to reduce the risk to them?

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