

Pandemic influenza – Employee briefing – No 2;

What is the current situation?

As the number of confirmed swine flu cases in the UK continues to rise, this briefing note is provided to keep all employees updated on the current situation and to remind everyone of the importance of good hygiene practices.

Should I be concerned?

There is no need for alarm. According to the Health Protection Agency, most people recover within a week, even without special treatment. We must however be diligent in maintaining our personal hygiene.

How do I keep myself safe?

There are a number of ways in which you can reduce the risk of infection to yourself, family and colleagues. Follow good standards of personal hygiene listed below. Avoid unnecessary visits to affected areas. If you know or have a strong belief that you have come into contact with someone with swine flu and feel you are affected you can check your symptoms on the [NHS Choices](http://www.nhs.uk) website [www.nhs.uk], or call the swine flu information line on 0800 1 513 513. If you are still concerned, you should call your GP, who can provide a diagnosis over the phone. If the diagnosis is positive, and as with seasonal influenza, avoid coming into the office until clear of symptoms. Any suspected or confirmed cases must be reported direct to your line manager.

If at all possible avoid contact with infected persons.

Research suggests that the virus can survive on hard surfaces (e.g. stainless steel counters, plastic washing-up bowls) for up to 24 hours and on soft items (e.g. handkerchiefs, magazines) for up to 20 minutes. Once the virus has transferred to hands, it was found to survive for only 5 minutes. Nevertheless, 5 minutes is sufficient time to spread infection, for instance, by putting fingers into your mouth or by touching your eyes. **The importance of washing your hands, the use of disposable tissues and good personal hygiene cannot be over emphasised.**

Good personal hygiene practice includes:

- Washing hands when arriving at work and before eating, drinking, smoking, taking medication, applying make-up, inserting contact lenses and after visiting washrooms;
- Covering all new and existing cuts and grazes with waterproof dressings and/or gloves before starting work;
- Covering your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. If you do not cover it, those droplets can spread about one meter (3ft), and someone very close to you might breathe them in
- Disposing of the tissue in a domestic waste bin – do not reuse it;
- Cleaning your hands after coughing or sneezing. Use soap and water or an alcohol-based hand cleaner;
- Avoiding hand-mouth or hand-eye contact – don't put pens/pencils in mouths.

Further information

If you have any concerns regarding swine flu, or need clarification on the above information, contact your line manager or your regional HR Manager.