

Information Update from Department of Health

Swine Flu – Wednesday 29 July

Please see the department's response to a Lancet article on H1N1 and pregnancy.

A Department of Health spokesperson said:

"This study is a reminder that pregnant women can be at increased risk from swine flu, but we must remember that most pregnant women who catch the disease are likely to make an uncomplicated recovery.

"Pregnant women should make early contact with their GP if they have 'flu-like symptoms. The GP will be able to advise if antiviral treatment is needed to help reduce the severity of illness and prevent complications.

"The Government has stockpiles of Relenza, an inhaled antiviral drug that treats flu without reaching the developing fetus. An expert group reviewed the risk of antiviral treatment in pregnancy, which is much smaller than the risk posed by the symptoms of swine flu.

"Our advice to pregnant women is that they should observe good hand hygiene, wherever possible, avoid contact with someone who is known or suspected to have swine 'flu and if they have 'flu-like symptoms, to make early contact with their General Practitioner who may advise treatment with antiviral drugs. "

The CMO reiterates his advice that:

Some pregnant women who catch the H1N1 (swine) 'flu virus will develop complications of the infection (including pneumonia) that could put their own and their baby's health at risk. The risks are greatest in the second and third trimesters of pregnancy. It is too early in the pandemic of influenza to be able to quantify these risks for the individual but most pregnant women who catch the disease are likely to make an uncomplicated recovery.

Our advice to pregnant women is that they should observe good hand hygiene, wherever possible, avoid contact with someone who is known or suspected to have swine 'flu and if they have 'flu-like symptoms, to make early contact with their General Practitioner who may advise treatment with antiviral drugs.

CMOs advice can be found here:

http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/News/Recentstories/DH_103071