

241109 Department of Health swine flu communications

Sample article for at-risk groups

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SWINE FLU AND KIDNEY PROBLEMS: KNOW THE RISKS

With winter almost upon us it's more important than ever to keep yourself safe and healthy. Here are a few facts that are particularly important for people with kidney disease.

What is swine flu and how serious is it?

Swine flu is a respiratory disease caused by a new strain of influenza virus. For most people, swine flu is mild. It comes on quickly and generally lasts for around a week. It causes a fever, tiredness, a cough and a sore throat. Other symptoms can include a headache, aching muscles, chills, sneezing, a runny nose, loss of appetite, vomiting and diarrhoea.

Some people are more likely to become seriously ill if they catch swine flu – including people with long term health conditions like kidney disease. If they catch swine flu, they may need to go to hospital and, in the very worst cases, some may die.

Others who are at risk of complications include women at any stage of pregnancy, and people whose immune system is affected by a disease or treatment for a disease.

Vaccines available now

Vaccines have been developed to protect against the virus that causes swine flu. These are now available for people in the priority groups who are more likely to get complications from swine flu. The vaccine is also being offered to health and social care staff who may be in close contact with people in the above groups.

If you are in an at-risk group it's important that you get your swine flu vaccination.

Vaccination isn't just about keeping yourself safe and well – it's about protecting those around you who may be more susceptible to the virus. Don't underestimate the virus, get yourself protected!

Already had the seasonal flu vaccine? You still need the swine flu vaccine.

Although some of the symptoms are the same, swine flu and seasonal flu are very different viruses. Because of this, the swine flu vaccine is different from the seasonal flu vaccination that's offered every year. **The seasonal flu vaccine does not protect against swine flu.** If you are usually advised to have the seasonal flu vaccination, you should have it.

Remember, even you're one of the lucky few who never catch seasonal flu, you may still be affected by swine flu.

There are two different brands of swine flu vaccine – Pandemrix and Celvapan. Many people given the Pandemrix vaccine will only need one dose. People who have the Celvapan vaccine will need two doses three weeks apart. Those with egg allergies are advised against using Pandemrix, as it is prepared in hen's eggs – the same way seasonal flu vaccines are.

What should I do now?

If you are in one of the priority groups for the swine flu vaccination, you will be invited to go to an immunisation clinic or to make an appointment at your surgery. Not everyone in the country will get their vaccine at exactly the same time, so don't worry if you don't hear from your GP surgery straightaway. However, if after a few weeks you haven't received a vaccine and you think you should have, get in touch with your GP surgery.

For general information about swine flu visit www.direct.gov.uk/swineflu or call **0800 1 513 513**

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**Supplied by Department of Health swine flu communications team
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