

Information Update from Department of Health

Swine Flu – Monday 20 July

CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER'S ADVICE TO PREGNANT WOMEN

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.

Bearing these risks in mind, at present, mothers-to-be are not advised to curtail normal activities such as going to work, travelling on public transport, attending events and family gatherings.

They are advised to take the following steps to reduce their risk of infection and complications:

observe good hand hygiene (frequent use of soap and water or sanitizer);

wherever possible, avoid contact with someone who is known or suspected to have swine 'flu;

if they have 'flu-like symptoms, to make early contact with their General Practitioner who may advise treatment with antiviral drugs.

Some mothers-to-be may wish to continue their day-to-day activities but exercise their choice now, on a highly precautionary basis, to avoid large densely-populated gatherings where they have little control over personal contact.

When the pandemic reaches its height (probably in the autumn) as many as 1 in 3 people may be affected. At that point, I may make a more specific recommendation to mothers-to-be and others (e.g. those on chemotherapy) with weakened immune systems to avoid densely-populated gatherings.

There is no need for other family members (e.g. partners, children) to take special precautions but they should also practise good hygiene.

SIR LIAM DONALDSON

CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER

20 July 2009