

National Pandemic Flu Service goes live

Swine Flu – Thursday 23 July 2:30pm

Log on to www.direct.gov.uk/pandemicflu or call 0800 1 513 100 or 0800 1 513 200 (Textphone).

New service will relieve pressure on GPs and NHS

A new self-care service which will give people with pandemic swine flu symptoms fast access to antivirals was launched today by Health Secretary Andy Burnham.

The National Pandemic Flu Service is a new dedicated website (www.direct.gov.uk/pandemicflu) and phoneline (0800 1 513 100 or 0800 1 513 200 (Textphone)) for people to check their symptoms and get a unique number which will give them access to antivirals if necessary.

People who have swine flu symptoms will be given a unique access number and told where their nearest antiviral collection point is. They should then ask a flu friend – a friend or relative who doesn't have swine flu – to go and pick up their antivirals.

The flu friend must show their own ID as well as that of the patient. The authorisation number and ID information will be checked to ensure it matches the information provided when the assessment of symptoms was completed.

Anyone who suspects they have swine flu is advised not to go to their GP or A&E.

People should contact their doctor direct rather than using the National Pandemic Flu Service if:

- they have a serious underlying illness;
- they are pregnant;
- they have a sick child under one year old;
- their condition suddenly gets much worse; or
- if their condition is still getting worse after 7 days (5 for a child).

Andy Burnham said:

“The National Pandemic Flu Service will give patients access to information and antivirals as quickly as possible. It will free up GPs so they can focus their efforts on helping those in at risk groups and patients with other illnesses.

“People can still speak to their GP if they are concerned. In fact - it is important to stress that people with underlying health conditions, pregnant women, and parents with children under the age of one should speak to their GP if they have symptoms.

“For the vast majority of people, swine flu has been mild. Some people find that they get better by staying in bed, drinking plenty of water and taking over the counter flu medication.”

Up to two thousand call operators will be trained for a minimum of three hours. Less experienced call operators will be trained for a day. Strict industry standard regulations are in place when employing staff. These include the right to work in the UK (therefore no illegal immigrants), satisfactory employment references and satisfactory character

references.

Doctors from the Royal College of General Practitioners will have a special liaison role with each of these call centres and will feed back problems or concerns that arise during the operation of the service.

As swine flu spreads, it is important to be able to recognise its symptoms. People who have two of the following symptoms and a temperature of 38° C and above or feels hot may have swine flu.

The typical symptoms are:

- sudden fever (a high body temperature of 38C/100.4F or above),
- and
- sudden cough.

Other symptoms may include:

- headache,
- tiredness,
- chills,
- aching muscles,
- limb or joint pain,
- diarrhoea or stomach upset,
- sore throat,
- runny nose,
- sneezing,
- loss of appetite.