

Protect yourself. Protect others.

H1N1 Influenza 09 (Human Swine Flu)

Information for supported residential services 23 June 2009

'Protect' phase

Victoria is in the 'Protect' phase of its Influenza Pandemic Plan. While this will change the way flu is being managed in the community, it does not change the previous advice about management of residents with flu-like illness in supported residential services (SRS). The 'Protect' phase includes:

- Control of outbreaks in high risk institutional settings, such as supported residential services.

When to report

SRS should continue to report any clusters of three or more cases of respiratory illness where the onset of symptoms have occurred within 72 hours of each other. Call the public health line on 1300 651 160 during office hours and 1300 790 733 after office hours.

In the case of a reported outbreak, Public Health will advise aged care services about management strategies required.

What are the symptoms of Human Swine Flu?

For adults it is the sudden onset of illness with a temperature of 38°C or more, recent signs of cough, sore throat, body aches, fatigue/tiredness or shortness of breath. Check www.health.vic.gov.au regularly for updates.

Some people have reported diarrhoea and vomiting associated with Human Swine Flu.

The virus has so far been mild and can be compared to normal seasonal flu that occurs each year. For those people with longstanding health problems, normal flu and Human Swine Flu may cause a worsening of these problems.

Seek advice by contacting the resident's Doctor if you think a resident has these flu-like symptoms.

How Human Swine Flu spreads

The Human Swine Flu virus is spreading in the same way as seasonal flu, mainly:

- From person to person through coughing and sneezing
- By touching something with the influenza virus on it and then touching their mouth or nose

What you can do to reduce the risk

Increase health and hygiene measures

Good personal health and hygiene remains vital. Washing your hands is the best defence against the spread of both seasonal flu and Human Swine Flu. This is very important before any contact with residents, particularly after coughing or sneezing.

Encourage residents, visitors and staff to follow good hygiene procedures, such as:

- regular hand washing with soap and water, or an alcohol based hand rub
- covering nose and mouth if sneezing and coughing
- use disposable tissues instead of hankchiefs and dispose of them into a plastic lined rubbish bin

The virus may live on hard surfaces (such as tables, benches, door handles etc.) for 1-2 days, particularly in cold conditions and may live on hands for 5 minutes.

Immunize against seasonal influenza

If you have not done so already, encourage all your residents and staff to be vaccinated against seasonal flu. While this is unlikely to protect against Human Swine Flu, being vaccinated helps minimise the risk of staff and residents catching seasonal flu-type illnesses.

Flu vaccinations are free of charge for residents, staff and volunteers aged 65 or over (50 years for those of aboriginal/Torres strait islander background).

SRS may consider providing the influenza vaccination for personal care staff, as part of their business planning.

Educate your visitors and remind staff

Remind relatives, visitors and staff about the risk posed to residents by influenza. If they are unwell with flu-like symptoms, ask that they stay at home and not visit or work at the service until they are well.

DO NOT allow staff with flu-like symptoms to attend work until they are well.

FOR MORE INFORMATION - visit www.health.vic.gov.au

Call the Swine Influenza Hotline Tel 180 2007

Call Nurse-on-Call Tel. 1300 606 024 – for expert health information and advice (24 hours, 7 days)

Keeping your SRS functioning effectively

It is vital that you have plans in place to manage your SRS during times of disruption, in instances such as a confirmed case of Human Swine Flu in your SRS. Your plans need to include issues such as:

- How to maintain staffing levels if staff were to get sick
- How to maintain good communication about what is happening with residents, their relatives, friends and staff.
- How to make sure you have sufficient supplies of general equipment and stocks that you use for providing your everyday care to residents.
- Having a supply of personal protective equipment (PPE) for staff and residents in case this may be required – this should include disposable gloves, gowns and surgical masks. This equipment is commonly required for situations when you are trying to reduce the spread of an infection.

For more information refer to the Australian Government's Pandemic Influenza Workbook: Building Resilience through business continuity and pandemic planning which can be found at:

www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/communities/progserv/Documents/pandemic_influenza/workbook.pdf

Further information resources

For other general information about H1N1 influenza 09 visit the Department of Health and Ageing's emergency website at: www.healthemergency.gov.au.

The Victorian Government website (<http://humanswineflu.health.vic.gov.au>) has information regarding the current human swine flu outbreak, including information for healthcare workers, businesses and the general public. There are numerous resources available to view and download on the website, including:

- Fact sheet about human swine flu for the general public, in a variety of languages
- Fact sheet for healthcare workers
- A list of frequently asked questions
- Posters – 'cover your cough and sneeze' and 'wash your hands regularly' which may be useful
- Latest media releases

The Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing have developed a resource called Inlu-Info Influenza Kit for Aged Care for residential providers of aged care services that you may find helpful. This can be found on the following website at: www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/ageing-publicatinfluinfo.htm

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