

# H1N1 Influenza 09 (Human Swine Flu) – Medication to treat or prevent influenza

## Introduction

There are cases of H1N1 Influenza 09 (Human Swine Flu) in a broad spread of countries across the world, including Australia.

### **Victoria has had cases of this strain of Influenza since 20 May 2009.**

Evidence from around the world is showing that this influenza is mainly occurring in normally healthy young adults.

Antiviral sensitivity testing has indicated that the virus is sensitive to oseltamivir and zanamivir, but is resistant to amantadine and rimantadine.

This fact sheet answers some questions about the use of oseltamivir (**Tamiflu**).

### **What can taking Tamiflu do for me?**

Tamiflu can prevent the influenza virus from spreading inside your body. If started within 48 hours of the first symptoms of influenza, this medication can reduce the severity of symptoms, and can reduce the time taken to recover from illness.

It can be taken as a preventative measure if you have been exposed to a confirmed case of Human Swine Flu and to help reduce the severity of its effects if you do contract it.

### **What is the dosage?**

Tamiflu can be used for treating people aged 1 year or older, who are infected with influenza. The recommended oral dose of Tamiflu for adults and adolescents is 75 mg (one tablet) twice a day for 5 days. The recommended oral dose of Tamiflu in children older than 1 year of age will vary with weight and you will be advised of the dosage.

(For children under one year of age, special consideration should be taken and guidelines for dosage have been developed by DHS and a specialist paediatric infectious disease physician.)

### **Prevention**

These medications can be used to prevent getting influenza in those who have been exposed to people who have recently become ill with this new strain. The recommended oral dose of Tamiflu for adults and adolescents is 75 mg (one tablet) once daily for 10 days. The recommended oral dose of Tamiflu in children older than 1 year of age will vary with weight and you will be advised of the dosage.

(For children under one year of age, special consideration should be taken and guidelines for dosage have been developed by DHS and a specialist paediatric infectious disease physician. These guidelines are available to doctors by calling 1300 651 160).

### **Who should not take this medication?**

You should not take Tamiflu if you are allergic to this medication, or to any of the medication ingredients. Before starting treatment, tell your doctor about other medications you may be taking. You should also tell your doctor if you have any chronic or serious illnesses, in particular if you have kidney disease as special precautions may be needed.

### **What are common side-effects of taking this medication?**

Overall, Tamiflu is very safe. The most common side effects of this medication are nausea, vomiting and other gastrointestinal symptoms. These affect less than 1 in 10 people, most often the first time the medication is taken. Taking the medication with food may help to reduce or prevent these side effects. If you notice any other side effects or if you have any concerns about possible side effects, please talk to a doctor.

### **Can I take other medications at the same time?**

Tamiflu is generally safe to take with other medications, but you should still make sure that a doctor knows about any other medications you are taking.

### **What if I am pregnant or breast-feeding?**

If you are pregnant or planning to become pregnant, tell the doctor before taking this medication. Tamiflu is a relatively new medication, and its safety during pregnancy or breast-feeding is not completely understood. This medication should therefore be avoided if possible during pregnancy or while breast-feeding, unless the risk from getting influenza is thought to outweigh the potential risk of these medications to the baby.

### **When don't I need Tamiflu?**

If you have not been diagnosed with influenza or you are not a close contact you do not need to take Tamiflu.

### **What does close contact mean?**

A close contact is someone who lives in a house with a confirmed case of Human Swine Flu. Household members may receive Tamiflu as a preventative measure. This should be discussed with their GP.

### **Why not just prescribe Tamiflu to everyone?**

Unnecessary medications expose people to potential allergic reactions and side effects. Medications can interact and cause unintended effects. This is why it is not good to receive unnecessary medications.

Unnecessary use of medications like Tamiflu may also reduce the future effectiveness of the drug against influenza.