

FAQ

Human Swine Influenza Infection

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8 Treating the disease

8.1 Are drugs available for treatment?

The swine influenza virus is sensitive to oseltamivir or zanamivir. Antiviral agents can reduce the severity and duration of illness but must be used under doctor's prescription and given in the early stage of illness. Thus, it is important that people with symptoms of swine flu consult a doctor as soon as possible, especially if they have a history of visiting an affected place or contact with sick persons.

8.2 Should I ask my doctor to purchase oseltamivir (Tamiflu) and keep it in his clinic for me, in case I come down with pandemic flu?

Whether a doctor prescribes antiviral drugs to a patient will depend on the circumstances and health needs of the patient, taking into consideration the presence of any contraindication and balancing the benefits of taking the anti-viral drugs against the possible adverse side effects. Indiscriminate use of antiviral drugs may give rise to drug resistance.

8.3 Will there be enough antiviral drugs to go around?

The Government has been stockpiling antiviral drugs according to the recommendations of the Scientific Committee on Emerging and Zoonotic Diseases in antiviral stockpiling strategies. A target stockpile level of around 20 million doses is maintained.

8.4 How do I know if I am suffering from human swine influenza given its symptoms are similar to those of seasonal flu?

The symptoms of human swine influenza are usually similar to those of human seasonal influenza. While history of contact with swine flu patients

may raise suspicion on the disease, the only way to differentiate swine flu from seasonal flu is by laboratory testing. Hence, it is important that people having symptoms of flu should put on a mask and see a doctor right away.

8.5 Can a pregnant woman take anti-viral agents?

According to the Interim Guidance on Antiviral Recommendations by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention of the United States, pregnancy should not be considered a contraindication to oseltamivir or zanamivir use. On the other hand, no clinical studies have been conducted to assess the safety of these medications for pregnant women and the foetus. Because of this, use of oseltamivir or zanamivir during pregnancy would only be considered if the potential benefit outweighs the potential risk.

8.6 What should I do if I think I have swine flu and need medical assistance?

You are advised to put on a face mask and seek medical attention as soon as possible. Take note of the Government's announcement about provision of medical services. List of Designated Flu Clinics can be accessed via the Hospital Authority website at the following URL: <http://www.ha.org.hk/haho/ho/cc/8dfc.pdf>.

For enquires, you can contact the Department of Health hotline on 2125 1111

9 About use of Tamiflu

9.1 What are antiviral drugs?

Antiviral drugs are substances that can kill viruses or inhibits their replication. Evidence so far shows that oseltamivir (known by trade name as Tamiflu) remains as an effective chemoprophylaxis and treatment against human swine influenza.

9.2 Who should not take Tamiflu?

People who have previous hypersensitivity reactions to Tamiflu should not

take the drug. If you are pregnant, breast feeding or have a history of kidney diseases, you should seek opinion from your doctor before taking the drugs.

9.3 What are the common side effects of Tamiflu?

The side effects of Tamiflu are usually mild and include nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, bronchitis and dizziness. Taking the drugs after meal may reduce the gastrointestinal symptoms.

9.4 What should I do if I develop side effects after taking the drug?

If you feel unwell after taking Tamiflu, please stop taking the drug and seek medical attention right away.