

## **Mitigation Phase**

### **Health Advice for Prevention of Human Swine Influenza**

#### **What is human swine influenza?**

Human Swine Influenza (swine flu) is caused by the novel Influenza A(H1N1) virus. Since its discovery in North America in April 2009, the disease has led to epidemics in many parts of the world. Like seasonal flu, swine flu mainly spreads from person to person via coughs and sneezes. People may also become infected by touching objects soiled with the virus and then touching their mouth, nose or eyes. The symptoms of swine flu are generally similar to those of human seasonal influenza and include fever, cough, sore throat, runny nose, muscle pain and headache. Some infected persons may also have nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea.

#### **Mitigation phase**

Swine flu is now circulating in Hong Kong, which has entered the mitigation phase of the epidemic. At this time, there is no requirement for hospital isolation of swine flu patients or quarantine of close contacts.

#### **How to prevent human swine influenza?**

- Wash hands frequently with soap and water or apply alcohol handrub.
- Avoid touching the mouth, nose and eyes.
- Cover nose and mouth when sneezing or coughing.
- Maintain good ventilation.
- Avoid visiting crowded or poorly-ventilated places. If you must do so, minimise the duration of stay, and consider putting on a mask if you are at risk of influenza related complications (refer to Table 1).

Table 1: Persons at risk of influenza related complications

- ✓ Pregnant ladies
- ✓ Children aged less than 6 years
- ✓ Adults aged 65 years or above
- ✓ Persons with chronic illnesses
- ✓ Persons with weakened immunity from diseases or drugs

#### **What should I do if I have symptoms of swine flu?**

- Put on a face mask.

- Seek medical attention as soon as possible and follow doctor's prescription.
- Stay home, in a separate room if possible.
- Do not go to work or school, and avoid having contact with others until your illness is over.
- Step up personal and environmental hygiene.
- Watch out for warning signs (refer to Table 2) that might call for urgent medical attention.

Table 2: Seek medical care right away if the sick person :

- ✓ has difficulty in breathing or chest pain
  - ✓ has purple or blue discoloration of the lips
  - ✓ is vomiting and unable to swallow liquids
  - ✓ has signs of dehydration such as dizziness when standing, absence of urination, or in infants, a lack of tears when they cry
  - ✓ has seizures
  - ✓ is less responsive than normal or becomes confused
- Consult your doctor if in doubt.

## What should I note if I care for a sick person with swine flu?

Patients with mild symptoms may rest at home and be taken care of by family members. The following suggestions will be helpful:

- ***In caring for the patient,***
  - Assign an adult to take care of the patient to prevent spread of disease to other household members.
  - Persons at risk of influenza related complications (refer to Table 1) should avoid taking care of sick persons
  - Keep the patient in a separate room if possible.
  - Remind/assist the patient to put on a face mask if possible.
  - Minimise contact between the patient and the family.
  - Remind/assist the patient to take medications according to doctors' prescriptions.
  - Encourage the patient to get plenty of rest and fluid to speed recovery.
  - No sharing of linens, eating utensils and personal items between the patient and the rest of the family, unless such items are washed thoroughly.
  - Watch out for warning signs (refer to Table 2) that may call for urgent medical attention.
- ***To protect yourself,***
  - Observe and remind other family members to step up personal hygiene practices.
  - Maintain household and environmental hygiene by cleaning with diluted bleach (1

Mitigation phase: Health Advice for Prevention of Human Swine Influenza (part of 5.25% household bleach in 99 parts of water), especially in areas where the patient stay, to prevent disease spread.

- When coming into contact with the patient (e.g. entering the patient’s room),
  - Wash hands before and after contact
  - Wear a face mask
  - Avoid face-to-face contact with the patient to prevent catching the disease through coughs and sneezes, e.g. when holding small children who are sick, place their chin on your shoulder so that they will not cough in your face.
- Pay attention to your own health condition. If symptoms such as fever, cough, runny nose, sore throat, shortness of breath or diarrhoea occur, you must wear a mask and seek medical advice.

These recommendations are based on existing information on human swine influenza and the local epidemic situation. They may be updated when new information becomes available.

For more information, please visit the Centre for Health Protection website [www.chp.gov.hk](http://www.chp.gov.hk) or call the 24-Hour Health Education Hotline 2833 0111.

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