

THE BLACKDOWN PRACTICE NEWSLETTER

June 2009

Flu

Advice from the Department of Health about the current swine flu outbreak changes daily as more becomes known about the virus and how it is spreading.

By now, you will have received the government leaflet about swine flu. Rather than repeat much of the information in the leaflet, this newsletter is designed to provide guidance to ensure you know where to find up-to-date information and how things will change if swine flu increases locally.

To find out general information about swine flu

If you are able to access the internet, you can go online and visit NHS Choices for information and answers to frequently asked questions about swine flu at

www.nhs.uk

This website is being continually updated with the latest news and advice.

If you do not have access to the internet, you can contact the Swine Flu Information Line on

0800 1 513 513

to hear the latest advice This telephone line provides pre-recorded information and advice.

If you have flu-like symptoms

If you believe you are infected with the flu virus you must stay at home and not come to the surgery as this increases the risk of spreading the virus.

At the moment, if you are unwell you should contact the surgery by phone in the normal way.

However, if it becomes apparent that swine flu has arrived in this area the surgery will be required to implement its 'flu plan'. If this is the case, all patients telephoning the surgery with flu symptoms or who have queries about flu will be asked to contact NHS Direct on

0845 4647

You will receive a message, which advises you what to do if you are calling about swine flu. Calls will be answered by trained health advisors. Where appropriate, you will be transferred to nurse advisors who will be able to assess your condition and give you advice on what you need to do.



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The reason for using NHS Direct in these circumstances is that the surgery must make sure that healthcare services are still provided during a flu pandemic. With staff at NHS Direct helping practices by advising patients on what to do, it will make sure that Practice staff will be working where they are most needed. Remember there will be fewer staff available because some will have flu too!

What you can do to reduce the spread of germs

Preventing the spread of germs is the single most effective way to slow the spread of diseases such as swine flu. You should always:

- Ensure everyone washes their hands frequently with soap and water



- Clean hard surfaces, such as door handles, frequently using a normal cleaning product.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing, placing used tissues in a bin as soon as possible

What you can do now

- Find 'flu friends' and relatives who could help you if you fall ill. They could collect medicines and other supplies for you so you do not have to leave home and possibly spread the virus.
- Making sure you have some simple cold remedies in your medicine cupboard in case you or your family are affected by swine flu.



Anti-viral medicines e.g. Tamiflu and Relenza

The Practice does not keep any anti-viral medication in the surgery as, if needed, these are collected from another healthcare agency by a 'flu friend'.

If you have any comments you would like to make about the services we offer, good or bad, please do not hesitate to contact Karen Button, Practice Manager.