

## Swine Flu - Information for Patients and Visitors

### 1. What are the symptoms of swine flu?

- Fever (above 38°C)
- Coughing
- Fatigue
- Sore throat
- Aching muscles.

Some people with swine flu have also reported vomiting and diarrhoea.

### 2. What is swine flu?

Swine influenza (flu) is a respiratory disease normally found in pigs, but human cases can also occur. This particular flu has passed from human to human in Mexico and the United States. It is thought that it is passed on in the spray from coughing and sneezing. Most cases, apart from those in Mexico, have been mild.

### 3. What can you do to help?

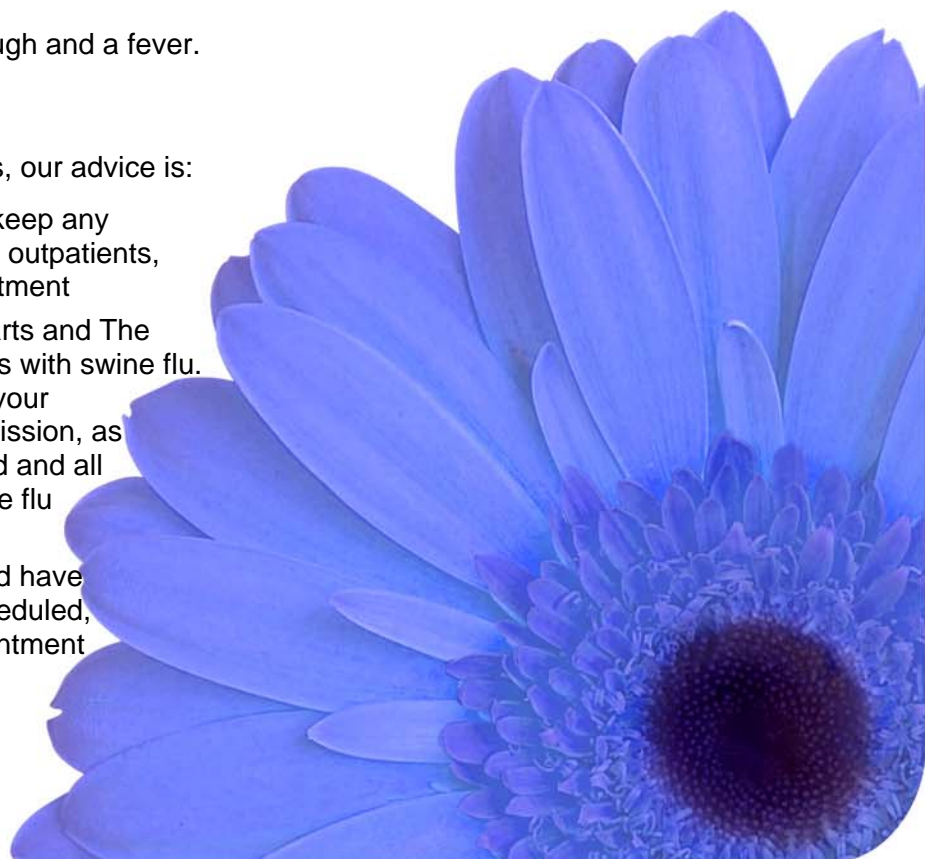
Germs spread easily in the spray from coughs and sneezes, so when you cough or sneeze, it is especially important to follow the rules of good respiratory hygiene:

- Cover your nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing, using a clean tissue - always carry a supply of clean tissues with you
- Throw away the used tissue quickly and carefully
- Wash your hands afterwards with soap and warm water
- Clean hard surfaces such as door handles frequently, using a normal cleaning product
- Stay at home if you have a cough and a fever.

### 4. Coming into hospital

As with any other viruses or illness, our advice is:

- **If you are symptom free**, do keep any appointments you may have in outpatients, and come into hospital for treatment
- Several hospitals, including Barts and The London, have admitted patients with swine flu. This is not a reason to cancel your outpatient appointment or admission, as patients will have been isolated and all precautions taken to ensure the flu is not passed on to others
- **If you have flu symptoms** and have an outpatient appointment scheduled, please re-schedule your appointment



# Information

- If you are due to be admitted to hospital and have symptoms of flu then please call the number on your admission letter or the ward where you are to be admitted for advice
- If you are in hospital, please ask your family and friends with flu-like symptoms not to visit you until they are better. To restrict the spread of infection, some wards may have to limit the number of visitors to patients. Please check with the ward for up-to-date information.

## 5. How to seek advice

The latest advice from NHS London is that if you think you've got flu stay at home.

If you experience a sudden fever, cough or shortness of breath or have a headache, sore throat, tiredness, aching muscles, chills, sneezing, runny nose or loss of appetite you may have swine flu.

For most people this is a mild illness and you should start to feel better after a few days without needing to go to your GP or A&E.

Help yourself and others by not spreading the virus. The best thing you can do is stay at home, rest, drink plenty of fluids and take over-the-counter flu remedies to help relieve the symptoms.

But, it is particularly important that you talk to your doctor if you think you have swine flu and are pregnant, very young, over 65, or have long-term conditions such as asthma or diabetes.

If you feel very unwell check your symptoms online at [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk) or call the Swine Flu information line on 0800 1 513 513.

If you have taken these steps and are still concerned, please call NHS Direct on 0845 46 47 or your GP for more advice.

Please do not go to A&E unless you are seriously ill.

## 6. What is Barts and The London doing?

We are following the Health Protection Agency protocol to manage any patients with flu-like symptoms.

Our Infection Prevention and Control Team is prepared and able to respond and advise as and when required.

## 7. Anti-viral medicine

Barts and The London does not dispense anti-viral medicine from its hospitals. NHS Tower Hamlets has set up an anti-viral collection point at Mile End Hospital for patients with confirmed swine flu. Please follow the signs to the Anti-Viral Collection Centre.

## 8. Further Information

Further information can be found at:

- [www.nhsdirect.org.uk](http://www.nhsdirect.org.uk)
- [www.nhschoices.org.uk](http://www.nhschoices.org.uk)
- [www.hpa.org.uk](http://www.hpa.org.uk)

