

## Fact Sheet for Parents/Caregivers of Children Sick with Flu

### **This is Influenza (Flu) Season:**

Your child has Flu symptoms and needs to be looked after at home to recover, this normally takes around 7 – 10 days.

### **Could My Child Have Swine Flu?**

The symptoms of Influenza A (H1N1) Swine Flu are the same as Seasonal Flu (e.g. coughing, sneezing, runny nose, sore throat, high temperature, headache, loss of appetite, muscle aches and extreme tiredness, nausea and vomiting, or diarrhoea).

A nose swab is the only way to know which type of flu your child has. There is so much flu in the community that we are not routinely swabbing many children or adults.

### **How Can I Prevent Others In The House Getting The Flu?**

At present there is no vaccine to prevent anyone from getting swine flu. The following hygiene measures can reduce the risks of getting any type of influenza (flu) including swine flu:

#### Hand Hygiene

- Wash hands well with soap and water for 20 seconds (especially before eating, after coughing or sneezing, and after going to the toilet) AND dry hands thoroughly for 20 seconds, preferably with a disposable hand towel
- Alternately use an antiseptic hand gel for 20 seconds
- Keep your hands away from your mouth, nose, ears and eyes

#### Coughing and Sneezing Etiquette

Children who are coughing or sneezing should be kept at home to avoid spread of any flu type to other children.

To reduce the risk of spread of any type of influenza:

- Cough or sneeze into a tissue, or into your own elbow
- Cover your nose and mouth when blowing your nose, use a tissue
- Only spit into a tissue or into the toilet, do not spit in public places
- Immediately throw the tissue into a rubbish bin
- Try to stay 1 metre away from people who are coughing or sneezing

#### Adequate Ventilation

Influenza can spread in indoor spaces that are poorly ventilated

- Ensure windows and doors can be opened (if weather conditions allow this) and that air-conditioning is working properly
- If possible do not re-circulate air through air handling systems, they should be vented to the outside to the maximum extent possible

## **Caring for a baby or Child with the Flu:**

Very young children and infants will probably have similar symptoms to adults but are often unable to explain what they are feeling. Younger children, especially those under six months, may also have diarrhoea, vomiting and stomach pain.

### ***When a baby or child has the flu, it is important to:***

- Care for the child in a separate, well-ventilated room away from other members of the household
- Give paracetamol or ibuprofen every 4 – 6 hours (for ibuprofen) for fever in the dose recommended on the package (unless the doctor has given you different instructions). Do not give medication containing aspirin to children under 14 years
- Offer cool fluids frequently, including water, fruit juice and milk. If the child is drowsy or not responding well, do not attempt to give fluids; instead, seek medical or nursing advice immediately
- Dress your child in lightweight clothing
- Give a lukewarm bath or shower. (Do not give cold baths or showers, which can be unpleasant and distressing for the child, and does not lower body temperature)
- Use salt-water drops (saline) to treat a stuffy nose
- Keep your child at home and resting until they can no longer pass on the flu virus

Antibiotics will not help children who have the flu and will only be prescribed for children who have complications as a result of the flu, such as pneumonia or an ear infection.

### **You should urgently seek medical or nursing attention when a baby or child in your care has the following symptoms:**

#### ***For babies:***

- Breathing is fast or noisy, possibly with wheezing or grunting
- Area below the ribs sucks inward (instead of outward as normal) as baby breathes in
- Has blue lips
- Is limp or unable to move
- Is drowsy or difficult to wake
- Is very irritable
- Has a seizure (convulsion/fit)
- Is not drinking enough fluids, the nappies remain dry or there are fewer than 4 wet nappies in 24 hours
- Any of these symptoms improve and then suddenly become worse

#### ***For Children:***

- Breathing is fast or noisy, possibly with wheezing or grunting
- Area below ribs sucks inward (instead of outward as normal) as young child breathes in
- Has bluish or dark-coloured lips or skin, particularly on fingers and toes
- It is difficult to wake your child, they are very drowsy
- Very irritable, not wanting to be held
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Not passing urine regularly (about every 6 hours when awake is normal)
- Symptoms improve then suddenly become worse

Older children and teenagers usually have the same symptoms as adults (as listed at top of page 1)

### **Children who need to take special care**

If your child has any of the following medical conditions, you should speak with your child's GP or specialist as soon as flu symptoms develop. Your child is likely to be prescribed antiviral drugs.

- Immune compromised or suppressed (for example cancer treatment)
- Severe or poorly controlled congestive heart failure or other significant heart disease
- Severe or poorly controlled chronic respiratory disease, including cystic fibrosis
- More severe asthma (e.g. people on oral steroids, high dose steroid inhalers, or steroids and long-acting beta-agonists)
- Renal replacement therapy

Phone **Healthline** on **0800 611 116** or your family doctor for more information if you or a child in your care has increasing symptoms.