

H1N1 Influenza 09

What is H1N1 Influenza 09?

H1N1 Influenza 09, commonly known as 'swine flu', is a new type of influenza virus which causes respiratory disease in people.

How is swine flu spread?

The virus spreads from person to person in the same way as seasonal influenza which is via respiratory droplets from coughs and sneezes. It can also be spread when a person touches respiratory droplets on another person, object or surface and then touches their mouth or nose or food they are going to eat.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms of 'swine flu' appear to be similar to those of seasonal flu which include fever and cough or sore throat. You may also have a headache, tiredness, body aches and in some instances diarrhoea and vomiting.

Like seasonal influenza, 'swine flu' may also cause a worsening of other underlying chronic medical conditions.

What is the current situation?

The situation is constantly changing so for up to date information, please visit www.flu.sa.gov.au

What should we do if we suspect a student may have 'swine flu'?

As with seasonal flu, if a student develops any of the symptoms described above, the school or preschool should contact the parents immediately to have the student removed. Not all children with flu need to see a doctor, but if concerned, parents should be advised to contact their GP. If the GP is unable to see the child, they can take their child to a designated flu hospital:-

- Metro - Flinders Medical Centre, Royal Adelaide Hospital, Women's and Children's Hospital for children
- Country - Berri, Mount Gambier, Port Lincoln, Whyalla and Port Augusta for children, or contact their nearest hospital or health service

Those living in the country, and not close to a designated flu hospital, should contact their local health service which will discuss appropriate action with the nearest flu hospital.

Some metro flu hospitals are currently running flu clinics which are separate from the Emergency Department. Please follow signs for the flu clinic when you arrive.

For advice over the phone, call the National Swine Flu Hotline on 180 2007.

The student should not return to school or preschool until a medical assessment has been undertaken and they have been cleared by a doctor.

What should happen if a student suspects they may have been exposed to 'swine flu'?

As the virus is mild in most people, there is no need to take any action unless the student starts to experience flu-like symptoms.

What happens if a student is confirmed as having 'swine flu'?

In many cases the diagnosis will be that of "flu". If a student is confirmed as having flu or 'swine flu' they should stay at home and follow the advice of their GP. They should not come back to school until they are well.

Teachers and child carers are advised to conduct daily health checks on all staff and children and send anyone who has flu-like symptoms home as above.

Will the school be closed?

Closure of schools is no longer generally recommended but the decision will be made on a case by case basis.

What happens if the student is at a boarding school?

If the student has to remain at a boarding school, they should be cared for in a single room and kept separated from other students until their symptoms have completely gone.

Staff caring for the student should limit contact with other staff and students until the ill student's symptoms have gone. They don't need to stay away from work unless they themselves become ill.

What does home isolation mean?

If your child is unwell with flu or swine flu, they need to stay inside your home and have minimal contact with other people in the house. Visitors should not be encouraged and they should not participate in **any** sports.

Your child's school or preschool may provide a home learning program so that the education of your child is not unduly disrupted. Parents should contact their school principal or preschool director for advice.

There are a number of health precautions that should be taken whilst in home isolation. These are listed in the fact sheet 'For people who may have been exposed to human swine influenza'. If you have not already been given this fact sheet, you can download a copy from www.flu.sa.gov.au

Do parents and other siblings also need to be isolated?

Parents and siblings are free to carry on as normal, including attending school. However, if they do start to feel ill, they should see a doctor or visit one of the flu hospitals listed previously.

How can we help control the spread of human swine influenza?

General infection control practices and good hygiene can help to reduce the spread of all viruses, including swine flu.

SA Health provides resources to help you spread the message about good hygiene. To download these posters and fact sheets, visit the "Wash, Wipe, Cover – don't infect another" pages at www.health.sa.gov.au/infectioncontrol

Information can also be found in our Fact Sheet 'Good Hygiene Tips'.