



29 April 2009

To Whom It May Concern

We would like to share some information with you. Here are some of the latest updates:

[The Swine Influenza Virus](#)

Present Situation

The World Health Organisation had raised the pandemic alert phase for the swine flu outbreaks from Phase 3 to Phase 4. The change to a higher phase indicates that there is sustained human-to-human transmission, capable of causing community-level outbreaks. This increases the risk of a pandemic.

Swine flu hit Europe with the first confirmed cases in Britain and Spain on Monday as governments and travel companies urged travellers to avoid Mexico where the virus has likely killed 149 people.

As of 28 April 2009, seven countries have officially reported cases of swine influenza A/H1N1 infection. The United States Government has reported 64 laboratory confirmed human cases, with no deaths. Mexico has reported 26 confirmed human cases of infection including seven deaths. The following countries have reported laboratory confirmed cases with no deaths - Canada (6), New Zealand (3), the United Kingdom (2), Israel (2) and Spain (2).

There are no human cases of swine flu in Singapore. There are 17 cases in total referred for further medical assessment. 16 have been referred to the Communicable Disease Centre (CDC) and one case was seen at SGH. Three cases referred to the CDC (including the two referred yesterday) have all tested negative for Influenza A. The case seen in SGH has tested negative as well. Most of the other new cases are Singaporeans who have recently returned from the United States.



All healthcare institutions in Singapore have intensified their infectious disease control measures under the heightened Yellow Alert level. Some of these precautionary measures have been proactively implemented while still in green status. Additional measures include donning full personal protective equipment especially in high risk areas such as the emergency department and intensive care unit, rescheduling elective admissions, cutting down visitors to patients, and recording of contact particulars of visitors. These will help reduce unnecessary exposure, provide for surge capacity and facilitate contact tracing when the need arises. Hospitals will also restrict inter-hospital movement of patients and staff, except in emergencies. Polyclinics and specialist outpatient clinics are also setting up triage centres to manage symptomatic patients with a travel history to affected areas, or contact with such persons.

Background on this virus

Swine influenza, or “swine flu”, is a highly contagious acute respiratory disease of pigs, caused by one of several swine influenza A viruses. The current virus is of the H1N1 subtype, but other subtypes are also circulating in pigs.

Transmission Method

Pigs can catch human and avian or bird flu. When flu viruses from different species infect pigs, they can mix inside the pig and new, mixed viruses that can infect humans can emerge.

Transmission among humans is thought to occur in the same way as seasonal flu -- by touching something with flu viruses and then touching their mouth or nose, and through coughing or sneezing.

People cannot catch swine flu from eating pork or pork products. Cooking pork to an internal temperature of 160 degrees Fahrenheit (71 degrees Celsius) kills the swine flu virus as it does other bacteria and viruses.



Symptoms Of Infection

Symptoms of swine flu in people are similar to those of seasonal influenza -- sudden fever, coughing, muscle aches and extreme fatigue. Consult a doctor if you develop any of symptoms. You should highlight to the doctor any possible contacts that you might have such as:

- i. Travelling to US, Canada and Mexico,*
- ii. In contact with patients with flu or pneumonia,*
- iii. In contact with live animals such as pigs in affected areas.*

Prevention

There is no current travelling restriction to United States of America eg. Southern California and Texas and Mexico. Avoid travel if possible. However if you do travel to such places, you should note the followings

- 1. Avoid contact with persons with symptoms of influenza or pneumonia.*
- 2. Avoid crowded areas and areas with poor ventilation.*
- 3. Observe good personal and environmental hygiene. Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water frequently and when they are contaminated by respiratory secretions e.g. after sneezing.*
- 4. Avoid using bare hands to rub eyes, mouth and nose without washing.*
- 5. Eat well cooked pork dishes.*
- 6. Avoid pig rearing areas and pig farms.*
- 7. Have proper hand washing after handling animals eg pigs.*
- 8. Be updated with the seasonal flu vaccination*



Treatment

Anti-viral drugs may be administered by the medical practitioner for treatment of all probable cases.

Current influenza vaccination does not confer any protection against the swine flu virus.

However vaccination is still necessary because if you come down with flu like symptoms after vaccination, then there is higher alert as to whether you may have contracted the swine flu or avian flu. Early treatment can then be initiated.

Vaccination is contraindicated for the following groups of people:

1. *Age <6 months*
2. *1st trimester of pregnancy. Vaccination is alright to be given for 2nd and 3rd trimester*
3. *Egg allergy such as urticaria, angioedema or anaphylaxis*
4. *Allergy to previous influenza vaccination such as urticaria, angioedema or anaphylaxis*
5. *Develops Guillain-Barre syndrome (weakness or paralysis of muscles) from previous influenza vaccination. This risk is very rare and is estimated at 1 or 2 cases per 1 million vaccinated patients.*
6. *Acute illness with fever. Should delay vaccination till after recovery from illness*

Adults and previously vaccinated children only require single dose vaccination. Previously unvaccinated children, age > 6 months to 9 years, should receive 2 doses given at least 1 month apart. You may get mild soreness or fever after 1-2 days from the vaccination.

Should you require any further information or clarifications, please contact our Corporate Services team for assistance.

Warmest regards,

*Dr Chng Shih Kiat
Deputy Medical Director
Raffles Medical*