

Press release re: Swine flu

In light of the developing situation around swine flu cases in Mexico, the US and some other countries, NHS Suffolk would like to reassure members of the public that the risk of catching this influenza is very low.

NHS Suffolk has begun rolling out the Department of Health's guidance and Health Protection Agency's advice to ensure that frontline staff are prepared should cases be confirmed in the UK.

The government has a stockpile of antiviral drugs (such as Tamiflu and Relenza) which should be sufficient to treat up to 50 per cent of the population if they become ill – a reasonable worst case scenario. We have been preparing our plans for a number of years and are among the most prepared countries in the world. The health secretary has said that the drugs have been shown to be effective if given in good time. In Suffolk we are putting the necessary plans in place to ensure their distribution if this situation becomes necessary.

It continues to be the case that anyone who has visited one of the countries or areas where human cases of influenza have been identified should monitor their health closely for seven days after the visit to the affected area. If during this period they develop a feverish illness accompanied by one or more of cough, sore throat, headache and muscle aches, they should stay at home and contact their GP by phone or seek advice from NHS Direct (0845 4647). s

Dr Brian Keeble, consultant in public health medicine at NHS Suffolk said: "We are working closely with our colleagues in the Health Protection Agency, and our partners in the NHS East of England to monitor the situation. There are no known cases of swine flu in Suffolk."

General infection control practices and good hand hygiene can help to stop the spread of all viruses, including the human strain of swine influenza. This includes covering your nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing, using a tissue when possible, disposing of dirty tissues promptly and carefully, maintaining good basic hygiene for example washing hands frequently with soap and water to reduce the spread of the virus from your hands to face or to other people. Cleaning hard surfaces (e.g. door handles) frequently using a normal cleaning product and finally, making sure your children follow this advice.

For further information, please visit the following websites

Department of Health <http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/index.htm>

NHS Choices news <http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/pandemic-flu/Pages/Introduction.aspx>

Health Protection Agency

<http://www.hpa.org.uk/web/HPAweb&Page&HPAwebHome/Page/1153496333353?p=1153496333353>

In addition, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) is now advising against all but essential travel to Mexico. For further information, visit the FCO website: www.fco.gov.uk

Ends

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For more information about NHS Suffolk visit www.suffolk.nhs.uk