

22 July 2009  
Dear Colleague

## **The clinical management of A/H1N1 pandemic influenza (Swine Flu) in Wales**

- The public is being advised that for most people who catch influenza the illness is mild and self-limiting. If they think they have the infection they should stay home and self-care.
- Those who have underlying health conditions or who are suffering moderate or severe symptoms are asked to phone their GP for advice and assessment.
- Antivirals can be issued by GPs using the standard WP10 form, which, for non-dispensing practices, should be collected from the surgery by the patient's flu-friend and taken to the local community pharmacy to pick up the medication.
- Suspension should only be used for those under 1 year. It is available from hospital pharmacies or GP Out-of-Hours Services (GP OOH).
- Pregnant and immunocompromised healthcare workers should not provide care to patients who are known or suspected of having influenza.

People in Wales who experience flu-like symptoms should stay at home and call the Swine Flu Information line on 0800 1 513 513 or use the NHS Direct Wales website [www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk](http://www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk) to get general advice and check their symptoms. Most people will get better with rest, drinking plenty of fluids and taking medication such as paracetamol for pain relief and to control fever.

## **From the Chief Medical Officer**

Welsh Assembly Government Cathays Park Cardiff CF10 3NQ	Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru Parc Cathays Caerdydd CF10 3NQ
---	--

### **CMO(2009)9**

### **Influenza A (H1N1) – clinical management**

Electronic distribution to:

**Chief Executive Officers NHS Trusts**  
**Medical Directors NHS Trusts**  
**Nurse Executives NHS Trusts**  
**Chief Executive Officers Local Health Boards**  
**Chief Executive Officer Wales NHS Ambulance Trust**  
**Medical Directors Local Health Boards**  
**Director of the NPHS**  
**Chief Executive NHS Direct**

For urgent onward circulation to

**GP out-of-hours**  
**GP practices**  
**Trust Chief Pharmacists**  
**Microbiologists**  
**Consultants in Communicable Disease Control**  
**Welsh Assembly Government:**  
**Head of DHSS**  
**Health Professions Group**

Requests for further copies of this letter should be addressed to:

Department for Public Health and Health Professions  
Welsh Assembly Government  
Cathays Park  
Cardiff  
CF10 3NQ

© Crown copyright 2009

This circular may be freely reproduced by all those to whom it has been addressed

Symptomatic people who are worried should phone their GP for advice and assessment for antivirals. Antivirals can now be accessed from community pharmacists as these services are routine, convenient and well-understood by the public.

### **High risk groups**

We recommend people in the following high risk groups should be given antiviral medication as soon as possible, preferably within 48 hours of the start of their flu-like symptoms. Those at high risk are people with:

- Chronic lung disease
- Chronic heart disease
- Chronic kidney disease
- Chronic liver disease
- Chronic neurological disease
- Immunosuppression (whether caused by disease or treatment)
- Diabetes mellitus

and

- People who have had medical treatment for their asthma within the past three years
- Pregnant women
- Children under five years old
- People aged 65 years and older

In addition to these high risk groups, doctors have clinical discretion and may wish to prescribe for those they have specific concerns about, such as those who have moderate to severe symptoms.

### **Accessing antiviral medication**

The regulations have been amended to enable antivirals to be prescribed on WP10 forms and dispensed in the normal way from Community Pharmacies. Local Health Boards will also have engaged Dispensing Doctors in this scheme. Antiviral medication will continue to be available through hospital pharmacies and GP OOH.

### **Antiviral medication for infants under 1 year of age**

The above arrangements **do not apply** for children under one year old for whom oseltamivir suspension can be accessed through hospital pharmacy during office hours and GP OOH providers at evenings and weekends. Supplies of the liquid preparation are only sufficient for treatment of this age group. All older children must be prescribed capsules of the appropriate strength.

### **Patients with difficulty in swallowing**

Any patient who has difficulty in swallowing should be prescribed the appropriate capsule strength and given instructions to open the capsules and

disperse the contents in a small volume of liquid such as fruit juice or sprinkle the contents on some food.

### **Interim National FluLine (England)**


The National Pandemic Flu Service, an Interim FluLine service, has been launched in England this week, in response to operational pressures. This interim solution will not be introduced in Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland at this time. There are messages on the telephone lines and web pages directing people in Wales to their local GP or NHS Direct Wales. Visitors to Wales will access their antivirals through primary care in the normal way.

### **Referrals to hospital**

If GPs decide to refer patients with suspected or confirmed H1N1v influenza to hospital they must inform the hospital so that arrangements can be made for the patient to be seen, taking due regard for infection control requirements.

### **Pregnant and immunocompromised healthcare workers**

Colleagues will be aware that guidance for vulnerable healthcare workers is being reviewed. All organisations should follow their existing policies for protecting vulnerable staff from infectious diseases. Pregnant healthcare workers should not provide care to patients who are known or suspected of having influenza, and neither should they enter parts of the facility segregated for the treatment of patients with influenza. They should be redeployed away from the direct care of suspected or known cases until they have been vaccinated or given birth. Practices may wish to discuss with their Local Health Board if such arrangements will cause difficulty for service delivery.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Iain Jones'.

### **Further information**

The following websites have further information:

National Public Health Service for Wales  
<http://www.nphs.wales.nhs.uk/>

Welsh Assembly Government/Chief Medical Officer  
<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/health/ocmo/>