

POLICY ON

PANDEMIC FLU

Guidance for infection control



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PLANNING FOR A HUMAN INFLUENZA PANDEMIC: INFECTION CONTROL

HOW TO REDUCE THE SPREAD OF PANDEMIC FLU

Introduction

1. Pandemic influenza is a global disease. It is hard to predict when it will occur, or the severity of it. When a pandemic occurs, everyone will be involved in the fight against influenza and preventing the spread of the infection. We need now to start to plan and to build good practice on infection control into our daily routines to help reduce the spread of the disease.
2. This guidance explains what staff can do to control infection when pandemic flu arrives.

Guidance

What is Pandemic Influenza (Flu)?

3. Flu is a familiar infection in Scotland, especially in winter months. The illness caused by the flu virus can be mild or severe, and can at times lead to death. Some groups of people – older people, young children and people with certain health conditions – are generally more susceptible to flu, and each year people in those groups are encouraged to have a flu vaccination.
4. Pandemic flu is different from ordinary flu because it occurs when a new influenza virus emerges into the human population and spreads easily from person to person worldwide. There were three pandemics during the past century occurring in 1918-19, in 1957 and in 1968.
5. As it will be a new virus, the entire population will be susceptible because nobody will have any immunity to it. Therefore, healthy adults as well as the elderly, young children and people with existing medical conditions will be affected. The lack of immunity in the Scottish (and UK) population will mean that the virus has the potential to spread very quickly between people. In comparison with seasonal flu, many more people could become severely ill and many more could die.

What are the signs and symptoms of Pandemic Flu?

6. We should familiarise ourselves with the signs and symptoms of flu. Looking out for the onset of flu for yourself and the children in your care can help decide what action to take. The symptoms of flu are:

Most significant	Other Symptoms
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fever• Cough or shortness of breath• Sudden onset of symptoms	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Aching muscles• Sore throat• Runny nose, sneezing• Loss of appetite• Headache• Listlessness/lethargy• Chills

7. Children aged six months or younger can also have tummy aches, diarrhoea and vomiting. In very young children, tiredness, poor feeding and difficulty in breathing can also be early signs of flu.
8. The symptoms of pandemic flu would probably be similar to those of seasonal flu, but they could be more severe and cause more serious complications. A key message during a pandemic should, however, be that, in case of doubt, one should assume that an infection is pandemic flu, and act accordingly. It is better that someone stays at home for a couple of days with what might turn out to be a normal cold rather than go into work or school with early symptoms of pandemic flu and pass the flu virus on to others.

Incubation period

9. The incubation period (the time from being exposed to the virus to showing symptoms of infection) is from one to four days: for most people, it will be two to three days.

Infectious period (how long you are infectious to others)

10. People are most infectious soon after they develop symptoms, and remain infectious to some extent until the symptoms have fully disappeared. In general, adults can carry and pass on viruses for up to five days, and children for up to seven days, occasionally longer. Over this period, the amount of virus, and therefore the infection risk to others, will decline as symptoms improve, but the virus does not disappear altogether until the symptoms themselves have disappeared.

How is pandemic flu caught and spread to others?

11. Flu, including pandemic flu, is spread from person to person by close contact. Some examples of how it may be spread are shown below:
 - Infected people can pass the virus to others through coughing, sneezing, or even talking within a close distance (one metre or less).
 - You can catch the virus by direct contact with an infected person: for example, if you shake or hold their hand, and then touch your own mouth, eyes or nose without first washing your hands.
 - Influenza viruses can survive for some time in the environment, for example on hard surfaces, (e.g. stainless steel counters or a plastic washing-up bowl) for up to 72 hours. In contrast, soft porous items (e.g. clothes, curtains, seat cushions, tissues, magazines etc.) the virus can continue to exist and spread for about 24 hours.
 - The influenza virus could be transferred to hands from hard surfaces for up to 24 hours after the surface has been contaminated and from soft items for up to two hours after, albeit in very low quantities after 15 minutes. On this basis it may be possible to catch the virus by touching objects that have previously been touched by an infected person, then touching your own mouth, eyes or nose without first washing your hands.
12. As a pandemic-specific vaccine cannot be developed until the pandemic strain of virus exists, no vaccine would be available until several months after the start of the pandemic. Such a vaccine would therefore play little or no part in the first wave of a pandemic though it could be effective for later waves, if these occur. As supplies of pandemic-specific vaccine will take time to become available, the Scottish Government will decide which groups should be considered a priority, based on expert advice.
13. The best way of minimising the spread of the virus is to take specific infection control precautions for yourself and children in your care.

What can you do to prevent the spread of infection?

14. This guidance is given on the basis that we, like most other businesses, will try to continue to operate as near to normal as possible. However, we need to take special precautions in caring for children because they are the major spreaders of influenza in households. In addition, because children touch their noses, eyes and mouths often, put things in their mouths, touch each other often during play, and frequently do not cover their noses and mouths when coughing and sneezing, flu germs can

spread easily. There is also a lot of contact between parents or caregivers and children: holding hands, picking up, feeding, and so on.

15. The Scottish Government may, through local authorities, advise schools and group early years/childcare settings to close to children to reduce the spread of infection. However there may be occasions where the Galleon Centre has to decide to provide a service taking account of whether it is practicable to do so

What should we be planning now?

16. Make sure we know what to do if parents, guardians or named contacts need to be contacted if their child becomes ill, or if you are unwell and need to go home. You should ensure that:
 - You are aware of pandemic flu symptoms in paragraph seven
 - All contact details (including emergency contact details, if different) are up to date - telephone, mobile, e-mail address and home address etc
 - You have contact details for any other service a child attends – sports clubs, breakfast clubs, after schools clubs etc
17. You should also plan what you will need to help you to reduce the risk of infection if/when there is a pandemic. For instance, you might want to check that:
 - Your hand-washing facilities are working properly
 - You have tissues, paper towels, liquid soaps, waste bins and cleaning materials
 - Regular cleaning of hard surfaces, particularly door handles, light switches, toilet handles and toys takes place

How to reduce the spread of infection in a pandemic

18. Here are some hygiene practices to help minimise the spread of infection:
 - Cover your nose and mouth when sneezing and coughing and use disposable single-use tissues for wiping or blowing your nose. Dispose of used tissues in the nearest waste receptacle or bin. Children (depending on age) should be asked to do this as a habit, especially during a flu pandemic.
 - Wash your hands and children's hands frequently using liquid soap and water, particularly after contact with a contaminated person or surfaces that may be contaminated.

- Wash hands after coughing, sneezing, using tissues or contact with respiratory secretions and contaminated objects.
 - Avoid touching eyes nose or mouth without washing your hands first;
 - Consider using hand-cleansers to maintain good hand hygiene when it is not immediately possible to wash hands with liquid soap and water.
 - Clean hard toys after each use as the virus can survive on hard surfaces. Try to avoid children sharing soft toys, as these are hard to clean adequately; you may find it easier to avoid using soft toys altogether.
 - Wash utensils and clothes in hot washes to destroy the virus. Clothes should be laundered in a domestic washing machine at the optimum temperature recommended by the detergent manufacturers that is appropriate to the maximum temperature the fabric can tolerate, then ironed or tumble-dried.
 - If a child in the Creche or Kids Club develops symptoms you suspect to be pandemic flu, you must contact the child's parent, guardian or known contact immediately. The child should be isolated from the other children but also supervised in a separate room until his/her parent guardian or known contact arrives. Very young children should be monitored at least every 10 minutes as their condition can deteriorate rapidly.
 - If a child's condition does start to deteriorate rapidly, immediate medical advice should be sought. However, you should also contact the parents of all other children in your care so that they can look out for any symptoms which might develop later, in case their child may have contracted the virus as well.
19. A summary of key messages from this guidance is available on the Scottish Government website. It has been laid out in A3 format as you may want to put it on a wall as a reminder.

The golden rule is that you should not accept any child with respiratory symptoms during a pandemic.

You must inform parents and guardians about this rule, and you must not be pressurised into accepting children with minor respiratory symptoms, even if the parents insist that they do not have pandemic flu and are “not that unwell”.

¹ The term 'hand cleansers' is used in this guidance for a range of cleansers and sanitisers available as alcohol gels and handrubs, (which are the preferred option) wipes and sprays. You should follow the manufacturers' guidance on the use of such materials

Further information and links

Information targeted at parents will be at
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2006/07/05121544/1>

Schools and children's services guidance documents:
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2006/07/05121404/1>

Government wide planning:
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/PandemicFlu>

The World Health Organization website 10 things you should know about pandemic flu.
www.who.int/csr/disease/influenza/pandemic10things/en/

NHS Scotland Infection control website -
<http://www.hps.scot.nhs.uk/haic/ic/modelinfectioncontrolpolicies.aspx>

PRACTICAL STEPS TO PREVENT THE SPREAD OF PANDEMIC FLU

MAIN POINTS	
Remember to wash your hands and remind children to wash their hands with liquid soap and water, or use hand cleansers, and make sure supplies are available	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• You and children in your care must use liquid soap and water to wash soiled hands. You may use a hand cleanser to wash your hands <u>if they are not visibly soiled</u>.• Wash your hands as often as possible between contacts with infants and children such as before meals or feedings, after wiping the child's nose or mouth, and after touching objects such as tissues or surfaces soiled with saliva or nasal secretions.• Wash the hands of infants and toddlers with liquid soap and water as soon as possible when their hands become soiled.• Strongly encourage children to wash their hands with liquid soap and water when they become soiled – <u>teach them to wash their hands for 15 seconds</u> - in line with the Model Policy on Hand Hygiene and the Hand Hygiene Campaign. Children with medical conditions may need assistance, as they may be at greater risk if careful hygiene procedures are not followed.• Ensure that hand-washing areas are stocked with liquid soap and paper towels.• Follow the manufacturers' guidance on the use of any hand cleansers.

WHAT TO DO?
8 ANNEX B PRACTICAL STEPS TO PREVENT THE SPREAD OF PANDEMIC FLU

<p>Keep your environment clean and make sure that supplies are available</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep detergents, disinfectants and cleaning products out of the reach and sight of children. • Clean frequently touched surfaces such as light switches, door handles, hand rails, toilet handles, toys and commonly shared items at least daily and when visibly soiled. • Use warm water and detergent or commonly available household disinfectants/cleaning products - following manufacturers instructions.
<p>Remind children (depending on their age) to cover their nose and mouth when sneezing or coughing and to wash their hands with liquid soap and water immediately afterwards – and make sure you do the same</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remind children to cover nose and mouth with a tissue when sneezing and coughing disposing of the tissue in a bag in a closed bin, which should be regularly emptied – Bag it and Bin it. • Encourage children to wash hands with liquid soap and water as soon as possible, if they have sneezed or coughed into them – wash the hands of those too young to do it for themselves.
<p>Observe all children for symptoms of fever and respiratory illness, especially when there is increased influenza in the community</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observe closely all children with respiratory illness or any of the symptoms given in paragraph seven of the Infection Control Guidance. • If a child should fall ill whilst in your care, arrange (wherever possible) for the child to use the first aid room to rest, away from other children to help prevent spread of the infection.

PRACTICAL STEPS TO PREVENT THE SPREAD OF PANDEMIC FLU

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Very young children will require careful monitoring (at least every 10 minutes) as their condition could change rapidly.• <u>If a child's condition begins to deteriorate rapidly, seek urgent medical help.</u>•• Notify parent(s), guardian or emergency contact immediately if a child requires to be taken home and advise parents, guardian or emergency contact to seek advice from the child's doctor or the emergency flu line - which will be set up before a pandemic.
<p>Strongly encourage parents of sick children to keep their children home. If a child you normally look after is ill, <u>do not accept them until they have fully recovered.</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Parents of sick children must keep them at home and away from the setting until they no longer have symptoms - to prevent spreading the infection to others.