

PANDEMIC SWINE FLU

WHAT'S THE IMPACT FOR MY BUSINESS?

The Government announced on 2nd July 2009 that swine flu is now widespread in the community and the number of cases is doubling each week. The Chief Medical Officer reported that if this trend continues, the projection is that by the end of August there could be 100,000 new cases per day (This figure may change in the forthcoming weeks). During the pandemic flu planning process the predicted attack rate means you can expect to see up to 25% of the workforce being affected.

If 25% of your workforce was off sick, what impact would this have on your business? Swine flu mainly affects children and those of working age, so employees may be off ill themselves or looking after dependents. It is spread from sneezing and coughing in close proximity to others (up to 1 metre) who then breathe in the aerosol droplets. It is also spread from contaminated hands to the face or hard surfaces when people have not washed their hands after sneezing or coughing.

What can you do?

PLAN NOW for this situation and decide which aspects of your business need to be maintained if a significant number of your employees are ill.

PREVENT THE SPREAD of swine flu following these simple steps:

- Raise awareness of symptoms (must have fever and at least 2 of the following: cough, sore throat, runny nose, headache, joint/limb pain)
- Promote a working environment where employees are sent home as soon as they have symptoms, and encourage them to contact the National Pandemic Flu Service on 0800 1 513100 or their GP by phone only.
- Adults with symptoms must remain self isolated until they are fully recovered. (Children must remain isolated for at least 7 days or until fully recovered, whichever is longer)
- Promote 'Respiratory Etiquette' – sneeze and cough into a clean tissue which should be disposed of promptly in the bin '**Catch it, Bin it**'
- Promote 'Hand Hygiene' – wash hands after sneezing / coughing '**Kill it**'
- Ensure that sufficient hand washing facilities are easily available and frequently used.
- Clean hard surfaces frequently with normal cleaning products. Pay particular attention to work equipment that is frequently touched by hands, such as computer keyboards, phones, door handles.
- Discuss with contract cleaners any changes needed to cleaning practices that you have identified
- Consider alternative work practices such as home working, phone conferences instead of face to face meetings, if appropriate.
- Use prominently displayed signs to remind employees of the symptoms, and to emphasis respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene

Further information is available on:

www.dh.gov.uk - 'Pandemic Flu Guidance for Businesses',

www.direct.gov.uk/swineflu - 'Swine Flu - Everything you need to know',

www.businesslink.gov.uk – Swine Flu

www.hpa.org.uk – Swine Influenza

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