

Frequently asked questions - Staff

General

What is Swine Flu (A/H1N1v) and why is this virus a threat?

Swine influenza (Swine Flu) is a respiratory illness caused by a virus that usually infects pigs. The latest outbreaks in countries around the world have been caused by a new version of the Swine Flu virus called influenza A/H1N1v. Mixing of human and animal flu viruses can lead to the development of new, changed viruses, such as the one that is currently circulating. Because they are new, people may have little or no immunity to them and they may have the ability to cause infection and spread quickly.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms of Swine influenza are similar to those of human seasonal influenza - fever, lethargy, cough, sore throat, body aching, headache, loss of appetite. Occasionally these symptoms are accompanied by a runny nose, sneezing, nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea. For most people the illness is mild and will last approximately 7 days.

How is Swine Flu (A/H1N1v) transmitted?

Human to human transfer occurs in exactly the same way as seasonal flu. The virus is therefore primarily spread between humans via the droplets from an infected persons' secretions (following coughing and sneezing) being inhaled by another person. Transmission can also occur from touching surfaces that have the flu virus on them, then touching the mouth, nose or eyes. This virus is not transmitted via food and despite its name Swine Flu can not be caused by eating pork or pork products.

What measures can I take to prevent infection?

General infection control measures, good respiratory hygiene and good hand hygiene will help to reduce the spread of all viruses, including human and Swine Flu (A/H1N1v):

- Cover your nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing, using a tissue where possible
- Dispose of all used tissues promptly – bag them and bin them
- Maintain good basic hygiene at all times. Wash your hands frequently with soap and water, to prevent the spread of any virus on your hands to your face or other people
- At home, clean hard surfaces (e.g. door handles, work surfaces) frequently using a standard cleaning agent
- Make sure that your children, family and colleagues follow this advice.

How long does it take for humans to develop symptoms after infection?

It takes between three and four days after exposure and infection for symptoms to appear.

How severe is the illness caused by Swine Flu (A/H1N1v)?

The majority of people who contract the virus experience the milder disease and recover without antiviral treatment or medical care. Of the more serious cases reported worldwide, more than half of hospitalised people have had underlying health conditions or weak immune systems.

What is a 'flu buddy'?

The health authorities recommend that you should identify somebody who in the event of you catching Swine Flu can help you by collecting antiviral medication on your behalf and ensure you receive food without having to leave your home/accommodation.

What should I do if I think I have Swine Flu (A/H1N1v)?

If you have flu-like symptoms and are concerned that you may have Swine Flu (A/H1N1v), stay at home and check your symptoms using the [National Pandemic Flu Service](#), an online service that will assess your symptoms.

Call your GP directly if:

- you have a serious underlying health condition
- you are pregnant
- you have a sick child under one year old
- your condition suddenly gets much worse, or
- your condition is still getting worse after seven days (five for a child).

Is treatment available?

For many people, special treatment is not necessary. However, the Swine Flu (A/H1N1v) virus can be treated with antiviral medication called oseltamavir (Tamiflu®) and zanamivir (Relenza®) to reduce the development of the virus and lessen symptoms.

The National Pandemic Flu Service will provide an authorisation number which can be used to collect these antiviral medications from a local collection point. For those who do not have internet access, the same service can be accessed by telephone on: 0800 1 513 100. A relative, friend or "flu buddy" can be used to collect the medications.

Is there a vaccine?

The Health Protection Agency has advised that a vaccine will be made available to priority groups at the end of October. Priority groups will be determined by relevant health authorities and are likely to include those with underlying health conditions which may make them more vulnerable and frontline staff in health and social care. The vaccine is likely to be available to the general public from January and most likely will be available through your GP.

What measures are Bournemouth University taking?

BU is working closely with and taking advice from the Health Protection Agency and our own Occupational Health Medical Adviser and will continue to keep staff

informed through the BU website (www.bournemouth.ac.uk), the Staff Portal and email.

Current Government advice suggests that the number of swine flu cases is likely to start to increase significantly again around the end of October and consequently that is when the risks to our own operations will be greatest. However we are mindful of the unpredictable nature of this pandemic and are planning accordingly.

Will the University continue to stay open?

There is currently no disruption to BU operations, but through the University's Major Incident Team we will continue to handle the risk to students and staff and to plan for increased risk to BU's overall business continuity.

What about social gatherings?

The Health Protection Agency says that although close contact with others, particularly in a crowded and confined space, speeds the spread of the virus, there is little evidence that cancelling public gatherings would help the community. No events are set to be cancelled.

When can I come back to work if I have been off with Swine Flu (A/H1N1v)?

The consensus of opinion is that you can return to work safely seven days after the start of your symptoms (5 days if you have been taking Tamiflu[®]), providing that your fever has settled and you are feeling well again.

I have to go home and look after my ill child. Do I have to take this as annual or unpaid leave?

As with any illness, if you do have to stay at home to look after your child or another dependent you should take this as annual or unpaid leave. For further information visit the Staff Handbook (Section B Family & Domestic Emergencies) on the Staff Portal.

I believe I have Swine Flu (A/H1N1v). Who should I report it to at BU?

As for any illness-related absence, you should contact your line manager to make them aware. They in turn will report it to HR.