

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND EARLY CHILDHOOD VICTORIA

Bulletin - 29 April, 2009

to

Providers of Early Childhood Services

Swine Flu

This circular contains current advice about swine influenza. Information is included about the level of alert in Australia, and what to do with specific concerns about swine influenza.

BACKGROUND

On 24 April 2009, the World Health Organization (WHO) (<http://www.who.int/en/>) advised the Australian Government of an outbreak of swine influenza in Mexico and the United States. Cases have since been confirmed in Canada, Britain, New Zealand and Spain. This has led to a pandemic alert which triggers certain actions but does **not** mean that a pandemic is inevitable.

No cases of this strain of swine influenza have yet been identified in Australia.

ISSUES

Level of alert in Australia

Commonwealth and Victorian health authorities are currently monitoring the issue, including increased international border controls, and have alerted doctors and hospitals. The Commonwealth will determine whether and when to escalate the level of response.

Advice on travel

The Commonwealth Government is also advising people to reconsider the need to travel to Mexico at this time. Information about travel warnings can be obtained from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) website:

<http://www.smartraveller.gov.au/index.html>

Individuals planning travel to overseas destinations are advised to check this site regularly for travel warnings applying to Australians.

Questions and concerns about swine flu

Concerns about swine flu should be referred to any of the following:

- **Call the Swine Influenza Hotline Tel. 180 2007** – for the general public and people returning from the Americas with flu-like symptoms
- **Call Nurse-on-Call Tel. 1300 606 024** – for expert health information and advice (24 hours, 7 days)

- **Call your doctor (GP)** – if you have an influenza-like illness (fever, cough and fatigue) and have travelled to Mexico or California, Arizona, New Mexico or Texas in the past seven days.
- **Call your local hospital** – if you have pneumonia and have travelled to Mexico or California, Arizona, New Mexico or Texas in the past seven days.
- **Visit the Victorian Government Health Information Web site** for up-to-date information for schools, children, parents and the community:
<http://www.health.vic.gov.au/ideas/diseases/swine-influenza---influenza-a-h1n1-virus>

Usual care

Standard good general health hygiene practices should be in place as per usual care.

If staff or children are unwell, they should seek medical attention and avoid public places and close contact with others.

It is not expected the Australian seasonal influenza vaccine will provide protection against this new strain of influenza virus, however standard flu vaccine recommendations should still be encouraged.

Action

1. At this point in time there are no specific measures necessary for swine flu.
2. All questions and concerns about swine flu should be directed to the resources outlined above.
3. Standard hygiene and health practices apply across all services.
4. The Department will continue to monitor the situation and will provide further advice as additional information becomes available.

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