



Education Centre
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PRECAUTIONS TO BE TAKEN IN RELATION TO THE POSSIBILITY OF SWINE INFLUENZA

Dear parent/carer

You would be aware of the current concern about the possibility of an international outbreak of Swine Influenza. After consulting with the South Australian Health Department I can advise as follows.

The Australian Government was notified on 24 April 2009 of outbreaks of human Swine Influenza virus. The World Health Organisation has now raised the alert level from phase 4 to phase 5 (of 6), meaning that "there has been human to human spread of the virus with community level infection in at least two countries" in a region.

Australia is now at the official "*Pandemic DELAY (OS5) phase*". This means delaying the entry of the virus to the country via border protection measures such as those now introduced at Australian airports and investigating any suspected cases promptly.

Over 100 suspected cases have been investigated in Australia but **none** have been confirmed as cases of Swine Influenza to date.

It is important that the community is prepared but does not over-react. The Australian and local health authorities are monitoring the situation and will provide advice as the situation develops to the Government.

DECS staff are observing the precautions indicated below to secure the health of children, students and staff.

1. DECS staff, children or students presenting with flu-like symptoms

DECS policy (as well as public health policy) requires the exclusion of a person with suspected or confirmed influenza from their preschool or school. This means that if your child/student shows flu like symptoms you will be expected to keep them away from preschool or school.

Regarding suspected Swine Influenza in particular - other respiratory illnesses are current in the South Australian community - the case definition for suspected Swine Influenza is "a person with an acute febrile (a temperature of 38C or above) respiratory illness (the symptoms of which are fever, coughing and/or shortness of breath) with onset of symptoms since 15 April 2009, with the onset being:

- within 7 days of close contact with a confirmed case, or
- within 7 days travel to the United States, Mexico or Canada."

Anyone fitting this definition should go directly to a 'designated influenza hospital' if they are within one hour's drive:

- In metropolitan Adelaide – Flinders Medical Centre, Royal Adelaide Hospital, Women's and Children's Hospital (if a child)
- In country South Australia – Mt Gambier Hospital, Whyalla Hospital, Riverland Regional Health Service-Berri, Port Lincoln Hospital and Port Augusta Hospital (if a child).

If these centres are not within one hour's drive the person should contact their local GP or health service for advice.

2. Protective measures

A leaflet - **WASH, WIPE, COVER, don't infect another** – is available at <http://www.health.sa.gov.au/INFECTIONCONTROL/Default.aspx?tabid=175>

This provides useful information to help prevent the spread of communicable disease.

In particular people should wash hands frequently, cover their nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing and wash hands afterwards, and regularly clean surfaces which are touched frequently, eg door knobs.

The use of alcohol based hand rubs for situations where hand washing with soap and water is not possible is also recommended.

DECS cannot give medical advice. People should consult their GP about the advisability of having a seasonal influenza vaccination.

3. Overseas Travel

Schools planning for staff or students to travel overseas while the Swine Influenza threat is active are required to ensure the following risk management precautions are adhered to:

- Any travel to a country with a Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Travel Advisory level 3, 4 or 5 will not be approved, in accordance with DECS policy
- Travel health insurance for all travellers is required, in accordance with DECS policy
- All people proposing to travel must read the advice provided by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade at the following web link:
http://www.smarttraveller.gov.au/zw-cgi/view/TravelBulletins/Health-Swine_Influenza
- Parents of students travelling are to be fully advised of the potential risk, and are to sign an approval acknowledging and accepting the risk
- All people travelling should be fit to travel at the time of departure.

Of course, travel can be deferred and I would strongly recommend that schools and parents seriously consider deferring travel at this time until more is known about the safety of international travel.

4. DECS staff and students returning from overseas travel

Returning travellers from overseas should be alert to any signs of infection. DECS staff will be observant about children or students returning from overseas.

I thank you for your assistance in ensuring the safety of all our staff children and students.



Chris Robinson
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Date: 1 May 2009