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NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE
Thomas R. Frieden, MD, MPH

Commissioner

HOME ISOLATION
Instructions for Patients Influenza-Like Illness Being Discharged from
Medical Settings
5/5/09

Dear Patient,

Your health care provider has diagnosed you or your child with an illness that could be influenza H1N1 (Swine Origin) (SO) virus. Influenza can be transmitted when an infected person coughs or sneezes. It is also possible to become infected by touching surfaces contaminated with the virus, and then touching your own nose or mouth. Covering coughs and sneezes and washing hands with soap and water or with an alcohol-based hand rub are essential in stopping the spread of influenza.

During the period that you have symptoms, especially fever, it is possible for you to transmit this virus to those who have close contact with you (for example, someone living with or caring for you). To help prevent transmission of influenza virus to your close contacts, the Health Department is asking you to **stay at home until at least 24 hours after your symptoms are completely gone**. During that time, please follow these guidelines:

THE PERSON WHO IS SICK SHOULD:

- **STAY AT HOME until at least 24 hours after your symptoms are completely gone.**
- **AVOID CLOSE CONTACT:** Limit contact with others. Avoid close contact such as kissing. Do not share toothbrushes, cigarettes or drinks with non-infected people. People living in the home with you should limit contact with you to the extent possible. Consider designating one person (not someone who is pregnant) as the primary person who will care for you while you're sick.
 - If possible, stay in a room separate from the common areas of the house or apartment (a spare bedroom, for example if that's possible).
- **COVER YOUR MOUTH:** ALWAYS cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when sneezing, coughing or blowing your nose.
- **HAND HYGIENE:** ALWAYS wash your hands with soap or water or use alcohol-based hand rubs after coughing or sneezing or throwing a used tissue in the garbage. Throw out your used tissues with your regular garbage. Do not touch your nose, face or eyes after coughing or sneezing.
- **CLEAN THE HOME:** While the virus is likely not spread very well from contact with soiled household surfaces, cleaning of surfaces that are frequently touched (such as door knobs or any other object that you sneeze or cough on) may help prevent transmission. All hard surfaces such as bedside tables, bathroom surfaces, doorknobs, and children' toys should be cleaned with a standard household disinfectant. If surfaces are visibly dirty use a household cleaner first, then a disinfectant. Wash your hands after cleaning the area.
 - Dirty dishes and eating utensils should be washed in a dishwasher or by hand with warm water and soap.
 - Laundry can be washed in a standard washing machine with warm or cold water and detergent. Linens and towels should also be tumble dried on a hot setting. It is not necessary to separate soiled linen and laundry your laundry from other household laundry.
- **USE A MASK:** When close contact with other people in the home is unavoidable, the sick person should consider wearing a surgical mask to help prevent the spread of the virus. Surgical masks can be purchased in a pharmacy, medical supply or hardware store. The person applying or removing the mask should wash their hands or use an alcohol-based hand rub afterward.

HOME ISOLATION - Instructions for Patients Being Discharged from Medical Settings (cont.)

INSTRUCTIONS FOR CLOSE CONTACTS:

- **SELF MONITOR:** Other household members should monitor themselves closely for the development of illness. If they get a mild illness with fever and a cough, they should stay at home and take the same precautions listed above.
- **HOME VISITS:** Sick people should not have visitors while they are ill. If anyone who does not live with the patient must enter the home, they should avoid contact with the sick person.
- **HAND HYGIENE:** All people in the household, especially those who must come in close contact with the sick person should clean their hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub frequently and after every contact with the sick person.
- **LAUNDRY:** If someone else is doing laundry for the sick person, they should avoid “hugging” laundry prior to washing it to prevent self-contamination and clean hands with soap and water or alcohol-based hand rub right after handling dirty laundry.
- **MASKS:** Close contacts may consider using a facemask (e.g. surgical mask). These can be purchased at a pharmacy, medical supply or hardware store. If a reusable fabric facemask is used, it should be laundered with normal laundry detergent and tumble-dried in a hot dryer. The person applying or removing the mask should wash their hands or use an alcohol-based hand rub afterward.

IF I AM SICK DO I NEED TO TAKE MEDICINE?

You should only take medicine if your doctor prescribes it for you. For people with certain underlying medical conditions, a medicine called either oseltamivir (Tamiflu®) or zanamavir (Relenza®) may be recommended. You should consult with your doctor to see if you need medicine. You should also rest, drink plenty of liquids, and take medications that you would normally take to treat your symptoms, such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen. If you have other underlying medical conditions, you should consult with your doctor. People who are under 18 years of age should NOT take aspirin or aspirin-containing products (e.g., Pepto-Bismol™), as this can cause a rare serious illness called Reye’s Syndrome in young people with the flu.

WHAT TO DO IF YOUR SYMPTOMS WORSEN

If your symptoms worsen, (see **WHEN TO CONTACT A DOCTOR RIGHT AWAY**), you should call your doctor or seek medical care immediately. When going to the doctor’s office or the emergency room, you should have a family member or friend drive you in a private car or take a taxi. Do NOT take public transportation (subway or bus). **If you go to your doctor, please contact your doctor before you leave your home and tell the doctor you have the flu. After arriving, go straight to the receptionist or triage nurse so that you can be put in a private room while you wait to see the doctor.** You may be asked to wear a mask and you should sit away from others as much as possible. **If you need to call an ambulance to take you to the hospital, let the 911 operator know that you have the flu and also let the ambulance crew know when they arrive.**

SHOULD PEOPLE I LIVE WITH OR OTHER CLOSE CONTACTS TAKE MEDICINE TO PREVENT H1N1 (SO)?

Most people who live with or have close contact with people with influenza H1N1 SO virus do NOT need to take any medication to prevent illness. To find out whether preventive medication such as oseltamivir (Tamiflu®) or zanamavir (Relenza®) is recommended, call a doctor.

WHERE TO GET MORE INFORMATION

For more information, call your doctor or visit the following websites that have information about swine flu:

WHEN TO CONTACT A DOCTOR RIGHT AWAY

Children:

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Lethargic or not interacting
- Increasing irritability

Adults

- Difficulty breathing
- Shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting