Swine Flu Update – Wednesday, April 29

We write to offer you: 1.) advice from Occupational Health for reporting and protecting yourself from swine influenza; 2.) information about obtaining diagnostic specimens for swine flu from patients; and 3.) guidance for use of antiviral agents in treatment and prophylaxis for swine flu.

1.) OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH

All employees: Prevention

Hand hygiene is the key to minimizing your risk of infection and from spreading the virus from person to person just as it is with the usual seasonal flu virus. For patient care providers Cal Stat is effective in preventing the transmission of virus and should be used frequently (always before and after contact with a patient or with the patient’s environment).

Use good cough etiquette. Cough or sneeze into tissues and dispose of them immediately. Clean your hands immediately after coughing and sneezing (use Cal Stat or wash with soap and water), and avoid touching your eyes, mouth or nose. An alternate approach is to cough into your upper sleeve.

Avoid contact with ill individuals at home and in your community and particularly those who have traveled to areas known to have swine flu or who have been in contact with people who have traveled to those areas.

Patient care providers should follow infection control guidelines closely when caring for swine flu patients.

All employees: Reporting

· Do not come to work and instead contact the Occupational Health Service if you develop the following symptoms:
  · Runny nose or nasal congestion
    1 Sore throat
    2 Cough
    3 Fever above 100°F
  · Do not wait to report symptoms or delay leaving work as you are potentially infectious to others immediately and actually the day before you begin to feel unwell (the symptoms of swine flu are very similar to many other respiratory infections and it can be difficult to distinguish).

1 If you become ill you should wear a surgical mask before entering the hospital to visit your primary care provider or the Occupational Health Service. Masks are available at all information desks.

2 If you are suspected of having or it is known that you have swine flu you will be required to remain out of work for 7 days after you began to feel unwell as you
are infectious to others during this time even once you start to feel better. You must be cleared by Occupational Health prior to returning. ***Managers should remind staff of this requirement prior to returning to work***

**Employees with Patient Contact: Workplace Exposure**

If you have been exposed to a patient suspected of having or known to have swine flu, contact Occupational Health immediately (617-726-2217). Exposure is defined as being within 6 feet of an infected patient without respiratory protection (either staff or patient wearing a mask). Preventive medication (prophylaxis) is available and may be of benefit at preventing infection or reducing the severity of infection. Current Public Health recommendations are for preventive treatment of health care workers with unprotected exposure to confirmed swine flu cases. The Infection Control Unit will inform Occupational Health when cases are confirmed. **If after hours, please page the on-call Occupational Health Nurse Practitioner (617-726-2000). Please call Occupational Health Services 7 am - 5pm Monday through Friday at 617-726-2217 with any specific questions or concerns.**

2.) **DIAGNOSTIC TESTING FOR SWINE INFLUENZA VIRUS**

There are specific procedures that you must follow for obtaining samples for diagnostic testing for swine influenza virus from patients. The protocol, instructions for obtaining samples, and the State Lab form, which you must complete, can be found on the Infection Control Unit website at [http://infectioncontrol.massgeneral.org/icu/](http://infectioncontrol.massgeneral.org/icu/) under “Swine Influenza, Guidance for Laboratory Procedures.”

Because obtaining samples for this testing may cause the patient to cough or sneeze, it is important that the samples be obtained in an enclosed area with negative airflow (Airborne Infection Isolation Room or a room with similar controls) and that the person obtaining the sample wear a gown, gloves, eye protection, and a fit-tested N95 respirator.

3.) **GUIDANCE ON USE OF ANTIVIRAL AGENTS**

The swine influenza virus is susceptible to oseltamivir (Tamiflu) and zanamavir (Relenza) but resistant to amantadine and rimantadine. We will follow the CDC guidelines for use of oseltamivir and zanamavir for both treatment and prophylaxis ([www.cdc.gov/swineflu](http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu)). We strongly discourage writing prescriptions for these agents for personal or family contingency use outside of the guidelines. Although hospital, state and federal supplies are available to us, we want to make sure that we use these resources wisely and to the maximum benefit of persons who need them.

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