

# PREGNANCY AND SWINE FLU FOR THE INDIVIDUAL

## Background:

Pregnant women are considered to be a 'higher risk group' for swine flu. This means that for a small minority of cases, complications could arise that put their own or their baby's health at risk. As a result, certain specific advice is appropriate.

Please note that being associated with an “at risk group” does not make an individual categorised as at risk themselves.

E.g. having a wife who is pregnant does not make the individual an at risk group; no special action at work is necessary for that individual.

If you are pregnant and wish to consider workplace adjustments regarding swine flu, it is your responsibility to inform Occupational Health or the line manager.

In a small minority of cases, complications may lead to early delivery or miscarriage. These risks are greater in the second and third trimesters of pregnancy.

## What should I do if I start to feel unwell?

If you are pregnant and feel unwell or develop symptoms of a flu-like illness (fever, lack of appetite and cough), you should contact your GP as soon as possible and this should be done by phone.

Other symptoms may include:

- headache,
- tiredness
- aching muscles,
- runny nose,
- sore throat,
- nausea, or
- diarrhoea.

Pregnant women who are diagnosed with any type of flu may require close monitoring. In the unlikely event that complications occur, it is important that a diagnosis is made quickly so that treatment can be offered promptly.

It is important to receive medical assessment as soon as possible as the antiviral of preference (zanamivir) for Pregnant women is best if taken within the first 36 hours where as the normal antiviral (oseltamivir) is best taken up to the first 48 hours of infection.

### **Is it safe to take antiviral drugs?**

If, after medical assessment, it is felt that you have flu then an antiviral drug may be offered. These do not cure the infection, but reduce its impact and help the body to recover.

There are two antiviral drugs being used to combat swine flu, called oseltamivir (Tamiflu) and zanamivir (Relenza). Zanamivir is inhaled into the lungs rather than given as a pill, which means that very little of it goes into your bloodstream.

### **How can I avoid catching swine flu?**

It is important to put this risk into perspective. At present, you are not advised to stop normal activities such as going to work, travelling on public transport, and attending events and family gatherings.

However wherever possible, you should avoid contact with someone who is known or suspected to have swine flu.

In addition, practical steps you can take include following the hygiene guidance already published:

- Washing hands frequently with soap and water to reduce the spread of the virus from hands to your face or to other people.
- Cleaning hard surfaces (such as door handles) frequently using a normal cleaning product.

General good hygiene can also help to reduce the chance of catching any viruses, including the swine flu virus. This includes:

- People covering their nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing, using a tissue when possible.
- Disposing of dirty tissues promptly and carefully.