

We need your help!

What Neighbourhood Watch coordinators can do to help in a swine flu pandemic

With cases of swine flu on the increase, the UK is preparing for large numbers of people suffering this autumn and winter, and there is a strong chance that you or somebody you know may need a helping hand. Neighbourhood Watch already plays a vital role in helping make communities a better place to live and during a swine flu pandemic, there are many ways in which Neighbourhood Watch coordinators can help.

What is swine flu?

Swine flu is the common name given to a new strain of flu. It is called swine flu because it is thought to have originated in pigs, but this is not certain.

What are the symptoms of swine flu?

The symptoms of swine flu are expected to be similar to the symptoms of regular seasonal flu. People with swine flu typically have a fever or high temperature (over 38°C/100.4°F) and two or more of the following symptoms:

- unusual tiredness,
- headache
- runny nose,
- sore throat,
- shortness of breath or cough,
- loss of appetite,
- aching muscles,
- diarrhoea or vomiting.

What should I do if I think I have swine flu?

If people feel like they have may have swine flu, they should stay at home and contact the National Pandemic Flu Service by either visiting the website www.direct.gov.uk, or calling 0800 1 513 100 (text phone 0800 1 513 200).

Contact your doctor directly rather than using the National Pandemic Flu Service if:

- you have a serious underlying illness
- you are pregnant
- you have a sick child under one year old
- your condition suddenly gets much worse
- your condition is still getting worse after seven days (five for a child).

People who have swine flu symptoms will be given a unique access number and told where their nearest antiviral collection point is. They should then ask a flu friend - a friend or relative who doesn't have swine flu - to go and pick up their antiviral (tamiflu) from their nearest antiviral collection point. The flu friend must show their own ID as well as that of the patient. There are thirteen antiviral collection points in Wandsworth but more may open as demand increases. For an up-to-date list visit www.wandsworth.nhs.uk

What can I do as Neighbourhood Watch coordinator?

- Identify elderly and vulnerable neighbours and find out if they have someone to call on if they become ill.
- Offer to be a flu friend to those who may have no-one else or encourage them to contact a local organisation for support.
- Be familiar with the process of obtaining antivirals- as well as the location of their nearest pharmacy that are dispensing tamiflu, known as an antiviral collection point.
- Set up a neighbourhood network of flu friends, who may also be able to help collect medicines, groceries and help with basic household tasks. This will assist us in slowing down the pandemic by ensuring that the sick don't need to go out.
- Maintain an active knowledge on the current information about swine flu. For up to date information on swine flu visit the NHS website www.nhs.uk
- Check on the welfare of those who live alone and could be vulnerable.
- Be a first point of call if people have any questions.
- Encourage anyone not registered with a GP to do so. They can contact the find-a-doctor helpline on 020 8335 1330 to find their nearest GP.
- When the vaccination becomes available, assist any elderly or vulnerable patients who are eligible for this to visit their GP.

For further information please contact the NHS Wandsworth flu line on 0800 917 2678 or visit www.wandsworth.nhs.uk