Responding to the Threat of a Swine Flu Pandemic

July 2009

phs Washrooms

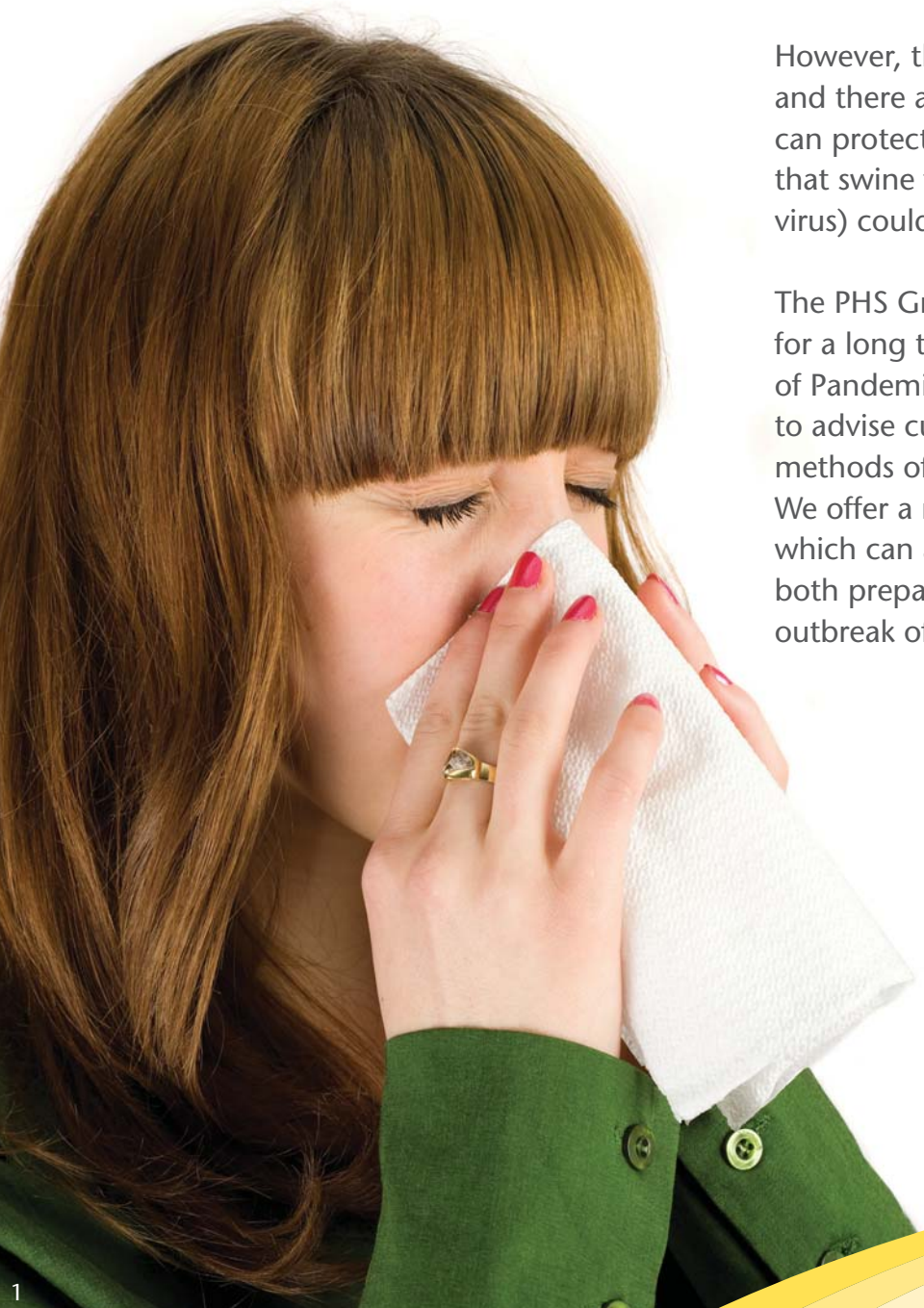
phs Direct

PHS is the exclusive washrooms services provider of NO-GERMS alcohol free hand sanitiser

Swine Flu Outbreak

Several thousand cases of Swine Flu have now been diagnosed in the UK, and the Government has said that the virus can no longer be contained. The number of cases is now doubling every week, and if it continues at this rate there could soon be over 100,000 cases a day.

The UK has now moved into the 'treatment phase' of its plan to combat swine flu, meaning that doctors will no longer test for the H1N1 virus and will advise anyone with symptoms to remain at home. This can be for up to seven days.



The Government's projections indicate that there could be 25% of the UK's workforce that will take between 5-8 days off over a 15 week period, either due to their own sickness or that of their dependents. This has serious implications for business continuity and for the provision of services in the UK.

However, this spread is not inevitable, and there are ways in which organisations can protect their staff and mitigate any impact that swine flu (or any other pandemic flu virus) could have.

The PHS Group has worked with organisations for a long time in preparing for an outbreak of Pandemic Flu, and is in a strong position to advise customers on the most effective methods of mitigating the spread of the virus. We offer a range of products and services which can assist your business in both preparing for, and managing, an outbreak of swine (or other pandemic) flu.

What is Swine Flu?

'Influenza A H1N1', commonly known as 'swine flu', is a respiratory disease, and is different to ordinary 'seasonal' flu because it's a new flu virus that appears in humans and spreads very quickly from person to person.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) declared that this outbreak of swine flu to be of pandemic proportions on 11th June 2009, meaning that there has been significant person-to-person transmission in two or more continents. The southern hemisphere countries such as Mexico and Australia have had significant amounts of this type of transmission, as it has coincided with their usual flu season.

Thus far, swine flu has proven to be a mild, if rather unpleasant illness for most people. The small number of deaths that have occurred have been where patients have been suffering with other more serious underlying health issues, such as heart or lung disease, which has put them at greater risk.

The symptoms of swine flu are similar to that of ordinary seasonal flu, and begin within two days of exposure, at which point the person is most infectious. They include:

- High fever (above 38°C)
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Headache
- Aching muscles
- Chills and shivers despite fever
- Exhaustion or fatigue
- Diarrhoea or a stomach upset (a particular feature of this strain of flu virus)

Unlike seasonal flu which is most dangerous to the elderly, the very young and the chronically ill, pandemic flu tends to affect previously healthy young adults. This is the case with this strain of swine flu, with adults in the age range 20-40 being most affected.

How does it spread?

Flu is transferred from person to person via direct contact or respiratory droplets, or picking up infection from hard surfaces (where the virus can remain dormant for up to 24 hours) and transferring them to the mouth or nose.

Being a new strain of the flu virus, it's highly unlikely that anyone will have any inbuilt immunity to swine flu, meaning that the virus is extremely virulent and will spread swiftly through the population.

How can it be prevented within the workplace?

There are a number of infection control practices that organisations can undertake in order to prevent the spread of the virus within their workforce (and in the case of education sites, among teachers and pupils). Ensuring that staff who have contracted swine flu are quarantined and remain at home until their symptoms have finished; supplying staff with infection control materials such as tissues, hand sanitiser and antibacterial wipes. Issuing instructions as to the effective use of these products are just some of the good practices that organisations can undertake.

There are two main ways of protecting people from pandemic flu, these are the Barrier Method and the Removal Method.

Barrier Method

This reinforces basic hygiene for people with a cold or flu to cover their nose and mouth with a clean tissue when sneezing, and to bin the tissue immediately after one use.

You may have seen people wearing paper masks on the TV and in the papers. These masks are really only effective against direct airborne contact with infected droplets, and in any case would need to be replaced extremely frequently. They are useful for front line medical staff and patients but not for people who encounter the general public going about their daily business.

However, if the roles and responsibilities of your staff involve consulting with infectious patients at close quarters, or dealing with hazardous or clinical waste during their work, the Health & Safety Executive recommend using an FFP3 mask which comes with a filter for viruses as it is a much better fit. These are more substantial than the paper masks seen in the media. Along with used tissues, these should also be disposed of securely after one use.

Removal Method

The Removal Method - of actually removing the virus from surfaces - is covered by Hand Cleaning and Surface Cleaning.

Hand Cleaning

Increased personal hygiene is extremely important under these circumstances to stop the spread of the virus. Washing hands regularly and drying them thoroughly is by far the most effective way of removing a flu virus.

The Chief Medical Officer has stated that

"clean hands are the best defence against the flu pandemic."

If there is not easy, regular access to soap and water, a hand sanitiser product is an important alternative. A hand sanitiser is also useful to have in entrances and reception areas.

Surface Cleaning

The flu virus can live on hard surfaces for up to 24 hours, so it is important to thoroughly clean keyboards, telephones, desktops, door handles, light switches, heating and air conditioning control panels, reception desks, meeting room tables and chairs, dining room tables and chairs, lift control switches and any other hard surface used in a communal area at least twice a day using antibacterial wipes or sprays.

How can PHS help?

The PHS Group offers a range of products and services to help organisations respond to the swine flu pandemic, and help prevent the spread of infection. We have worked for many years helping to develop plans for flu pandemics. As leaders in our field, we have the experience and expertise to assist in this area, providing sound advice on the most appropriate products and services required.

Hand Cleaning

PHS supply a range of antibacterial soap, as well as hand sanitiser products. These products are available on both a service and sale basis.

NO-GERMS is an alcohol free hand sanitiser and as such is also suitable for use in environments where an alcohol based sanitiser is not appropriate - such as schools, mental health areas and prisons.

As NO-GERMS is non-flammable unlike alcohol based products it can be taken on to aeroplanes. NO-GERMS is the UK's leading non-alcohol hand sanitiser, and is well-known in the retail sector.

NO-GERMS

NO-GERMS kills 99.9% of all germs and is effective against MRSA and flu viruses, and remains so for up to 4 hours after application. It is alcohol, paraben and fragrance free and is not drying to the skin, containing moisturisers such as aloe vera, chamomile and lavender for a comfortable feel. It is presented as either a foam or spray product and can be supplied as a desktop bottle or in a wall-mounted foam dispenser.

PHS is now the exclusive NO-GERMS washrooms services provider and can provide NO-GERMS on a service basis. PHS can also exclusively supply NO-GERMS in a 5 litre bottle to refill PHS foam dispensers.

Importantly, PHS hand sanitiser dispensers are also made with SteriTouch antibacterial surface protection which kills bacteria including MRSA and E-coli, ensuring that there are no germs on the outside of the unit as well as NO-GERMS on the inside.

Secure Disposal

If someone on-site is known to be infectious, it is unlikely that they will still be there. However, their tissues would be classed as infectious waste and would need to be securely disposed of by a waste disposal specialist such as PHS. In addition, this would also apply if someone on-site has been infected by the virus and there is a concern that there may be further incidents in other staff or visitors. PHS is able to provide a secure and hygienic disposal service for items that are regarded as clinical and hazardous waste. This pedal operated bin is approved to standard UN 3291.

If there are no cases of swine flu on site, PHS can arrange for the disposal of these items in a 60 litre unit, providing a suitable means of disposal at agreed service frequencies.

Hazardous Waste Disposal Unit

Surface Cleaning

PHS recommend using the Safezone antibacterial spray which is effective against flu viruses and other bacteria including MRSA, E-coli and salmonella. Also available are A-wipes - antibacterial wipes which are effective against flu virus and other bacteria, and are used in the NHS.

PHS also recommend Biozone, a wall-mounted unit which destroys bacteria both in the air and on surfaces, using a unique combination of odour sterilising techniques. It has proven effective against highly pathogenic viruses, killing flu viruses to 99.9% and can be located within washrooms or other communal areas.

A-Wipes

Safezone

Biozone

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Please contact us on the numbers below:

*For serviced products call **029 2080 9090***
www.phs.co.uk/washrooms

*For sale products call **01827 255500***
www.phs.co.uk/direct

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