



## MEMORANDUM # 24-09

**TO:** All Staff & Parents/Caregivers  
**FROM:** Jan Ballantyne  
**DATE:** 16 June 2009  
**RE:** Swine Flu Pandemic - Further Information

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Kia ora Koutou

Thank you for the calm and sensible approach that you are all taking regarding this very worrying issue. I have printed off colour posters and a hand washing information sheet (provided through the Ministry of Education website section on pandemic planning) so that you can talk to children about hand washing by telling them about “what came in the mail today”. I know you will all have been doing this already but repetition is likely to get more consistent results and young children like to think that something came in the mail especially for them.

### **Swine Flu Infection Control Facts:**

*This information has been provided by the Ministry of Education in consultation with the Ministry of Health. I have made minor amendments to make it relevant to our kindergartens and centres.*

### **Hand washing**

Hand washing is the single most important measure that will reduce the risk of transmitting infectious organisms from one person to another. To support high standards of hygiene in kindergarten/centres, a ‘How to Wash Your Hands’ poster has been mailed out for each staff and children’s bathroom.

The Ministry of Education recommends you place this poster (sent to you in hard copy in this week’s mail out) in toilets and kitchens to remind children and staff to wash their hands with soap and water and to dry them with disposable towels. **These practices should also be used when preparing/handling food.**

The following responses should be used at all times and particularly during the active (red) stages of a pandemic to prevent or reduce the spread of influenza:

### **Hand washing and drying should also occur after:**

- coughing,
- sneezing,
- handling used tissues,
- using toilets,
- touching objects, materials or hard surfaces that may have been contaminated by someone with the infectious illness or the infected person themselves.

### **Hygiene can also be maintained by:**

- using disposable towels to open toilet doors (doors to children's toilets should not be shut and please ensure that there are no toilets with curtains for privacy) cleaning surfaces touched by someone with an infectious illness (phones etc.) or not shaking out their clothing, linen or towels
- not sharing cutlery, cups or plates
- placing waste that could be infected (used tissues etc.) into covered rubbish bins.

### **Signs of illness**

- Children and staff members who begin to display respiratory infection symptoms (colds, flu etc.) are to follow the following etiquette whenever they are in the presence of others:
- avoid close contact (less than one metre) with other people
- cover the nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing with a tissue or sleeve (not hand)
- use disposable tissues to contain any secretions
- immediately dispose of used tissues in the nearest waste receptacle
- immediately wash and dry their hands
- if staff become unwell at work they should apply a face mask, notify the Pandemic Manager, **Jan Ballantyne or your Manager, Professional Practice**, and wait away from children for clearance to go home.

### **Vaccination**

Once the strain of the influenza is identified, vaccine supplies can be developed. These supplies will be supplied by the Ministry of Health for all New Zealanders. Children and staff will be given every opportunity to be vaccinated by a medical practitioner.

### **Dealing with illness at home**

In the active (red) stages of a pandemic, children and employees must not come in to kindergarten/centre if they have:-

- chills, shivering and a fever
- muscle aches and pains
- sore throat
- dry cough
- trouble breathing
- sneezing
- a stuffy or runny nose.

If the symptoms occur at home, the parent or staff member should advise their teacher or head teacher/centre manager, stay at home, seek medical advice and assistance and wait until they have recovered fully before returning to kindergarten/centre. The children or staff member may need to undertake a gradual return to the kindergarten/centre.

### **Dealing with illness at kindergarten/centre during the active stages (Red)**

A children or staff member in the kindergarten/centre may develop some or all of the influenza symptoms listed below and become a 'suspect case' during the active stages of a pandemic:

- Suddenly feeling unwell (or much worse)
- Have a very high temperature (over 40°C or 104°F) that won't come down with paracetamol
- Pain in the chest
- Trouble breathing
- Bluish colour around the lips and cheeks
- Fainting
- Persistent vomiting or diarrhoea.

If the person stops breathing, becomes unconscious or has seizures – **CALL 111**.

Please advise **Jan Ballantyne or your Manager, Professional Practice** immediately if this occurs.

For a 'suspect case', the children or staff member is to be provided with a disposable surgical face mask, and told to remain in an isolation room where they are distanced from children and staff, while the Parent/District Health Nurse is contacted.

### **Process for dealing with ill children and staff members**

Ill children and staff members should be referred to the Association's appointed Pandemic Manager, **Jan Ballantyne or your Manager, Professional Practice**, for advice and support during the active (red) stage of a pandemic.

1. The Pandemic Manager should, if possible, avoid visiting the person and manage the process by phone using the screening flowchart featured later on in this document.
2. If the child or staff member does not have the symptoms outlined he or she is unlikely to have influenza and should be reassured. The child or staff member should also be advised to contact the Pandemic Manager back or contact his/her doctor if they are still concerned.
3. The child or staff member must then be sent home or told to remain at home and to immediately contact a doctor as advised by Ministry of Health on its website at that time. This may involve phoning the person's normal doctor or nurse, next of kin, or a specially designated centre to seek further advice. The Pandemic Manager will inform the child's or staff member's head teacher/centre manager of the situation.
4. The children's/area/toys or staff member's desk and stationary should be cleaned and disinfected by staff or the cleaner wearing appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) such as masks and gloves. Shared desks will need to be cleaned immediately.

5. Issues that will be considered include:
- Providing advice to the children or staff member on how long to stay away from kindergarten/centre will be based on advice from the Ministry of Health website, which will have advice on this once the characteristics of a pandemic are known
  - Decisions on their absence or reliever arrangements
  - Checking on the children or staff member during his/her absence from kindergarten/centre. This will facilitate treatment and contact tracing if they become ill. Once the child or staff member's health is no longer a concern, they should contact the Pandemic Manager and will be encouraged to return to the kindergarten/centre.

### **Social Distancing**

Social distancing is a strategy to protect staff and children during a pandemic by minimising their contact with others. Events involving large gatherings should be avoided, whether inside or outside. A distance of at least one metre should be maintained between people wherever practical. Larger distances are more effective. Visiting people who are unwell should be avoided unless it is essential.

The Ministry of Health has the following suggestions for minimising contact, but each kindergarten/centre will need to decide which of these measures are practicable for them:

- Where possible avoid meeting people face-to-face – use the telephone, video conferencing and the internet to conduct business as much as possible – even when participants are in the same building.
- Avoid any unnecessary travel and cancel or postpone non-essential meetings, gatherings, workshops or training sessions.
- Bring lunch and eat away from others (avoid the staffroom and crowded cafes). Introduce staggered lunchtimes and morning teas to reduce numbers in the staffroom.
- Do not congregate in staffrooms or other areas where people socialise. Do what needs to be done and then leave the area.
- If a face-to-face meeting with people is unavoidable, minimise the meeting time, choose a large meeting room and sit at least one metre away from each other if possible. Avoid shaking hands or hugging. Consider holding meetings via conference call or outside.
- Encourage children and staff to avoid recreational or other leisure classes or meetings where they might come into contact with infectious people.
- Any form of contact with people who are unwell with the pandemic influenza, including visiting, should be avoided.

Any children or staff members who have face-to-face contact with members of the public where social distancing is not possible or practical, will need to follow Ministry of Health guidelines and may be issued with face masks. Staff members should insist visitors and people with any form of respiratory infection symptoms wear face masks, stay at least one metre away and/or leave the area.

### **Contact Tracing and Management**

Where a child or staff member is confirmed as being sick with swine flu, to reduce the risk of further infection, contacts will be expected to stay at home and avoid contact with others for a recommended period. This period will be set by health officials not the Ministry of Education.

The role of contact tracing may vary according to the phase of the pandemic. At an early stage, when efforts are directed at keeping the pandemic out or managing small clusters, contact tracing and quarantine of cases and contacts will be vigorous. If, however, the pandemic affects larger numbers of people across the country, it will not be effective as a strategy to contain the pandemic, and may be dropped. Privacy regarding patient details will be maintained where possible.

If a doctor identifies the patient as being a suspect or confirmed case, they will commence contact tracing in accordance with the protocols set by Ministry of Health. This is likely to involve making contact with the patient's kindergarten/centre.

Please also refer to the attached sheet for instructions on how to clean your kindergarten/centre during a pandemic.

I do hope that the information in this memo will be helpful and reassure staff families that we have a plan in place as recommended by the Ministry of Education. Should any kindergarten/centre have a suspected or confirmed case of swine flu all necessary action will be taken based on advice from the relevant Ministry of Health officials.

Naku noa, na

Jan Ballantyne  
General Manager