

**Church of Scotland – Ministries Council**  
**Swine Flu – Some Basic Information**

**Advice for Presbyteries**

In the event of a serious outbreak of Swine Flu in Scotland and in your area in particular, here are some common sense things you can do to help inform ministers and congregations and to reduce the spread of infection.

1. Make sure you have a nominated contact person in every congregation in order to get in touch with people with updated information and details of any changes in plans, cancellation of events or rearrangement of venues.
2. At the earliest opportunity emphasise the need for good hand hygiene, and demonstrate this by having anti-bacterial hand wash available and encourage people to use this regularly.
3. Advise people to avoid touching eyes, nose or mouth with hands which may have been contaminated.
4. Encourage people to carry tissues and always cover their nose and mouth when sneezing or coughing. Then dispose of tissues in the nearest bin.
5. Ensure that surfaces which might become contaminated (e.g. hand rails, door handles, work surfaces, communion vessels, etc) are regularly cleaned with detergent and warm water.
6. Impress upon people who develop flu-like symptoms the need to contact NHS 24 or their GP and stay at home until it is confirmed whether or not they have Swine Flu. At this stage symptoms are normally mild and last for around 8 days on average. Stay at home until fully recovered.
7. Where a member of the group does go on to develop Swine Flu, emphasise the need to avoid visiting and suggest keeping contact through email, telephone or sending cards.
8. Develop plans for ensuring continuity of worship through designating key buildings in the Presbytery where worship will continue for a whole area even if the minister of that congregation is off sick.
9. Try to reassure people and encourage to them to take common sense steps to look after themselves and those around them.

## **Advice for Ministers and Congregations**

It is possible that there will be an outbreak of Swine Flu in Scotland this autumn. Here is some common sense advice for you to follow if you suspect that you have Swine Flu or if someone in your local church has developed the condition.

1. At all times practise good hand hygiene. Wash your hands when you go to the toilet. Carry around a small bottle of anti-bacterial hand wash to use when you sneeze, cough or if you are in contact with someone who seems to have flu-like symptoms.
2. Avoid touching eyes, nose or mouth with hands which may have been contaminated.
3. Carry tissues and always cover your nose and mouth when sneezing or coughing. Then dispose of tissues in the nearest bin.
4. Ensure that surfaces which might become contaminated (e.g. door handles, hand rails, work surfaces, communion vessels, etc) are regularly cleaned with detergent and warm water.
5. For the period of the outbreak, the sharing of common vessels (e.g. the common cup) should stop.
6. If you are visiting a home where someone has the flu, during a pandemic, try to stay at least one meter away from the ill person and wash your hands after visiting.
7. If you do develop Swine Flu let people know you're unwell and tell them to stay away until you get better. Don't go back to Church until you have been told by a medical professional that it is safe for you to do so.
8. Ensure that others who meet regularly in groups or in public worship do not take the risk of attending if they have suspected symptoms of the flu.
9. Look for advice from the Scottish Government online. The web address of the Scottish Government is:  
[www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Health](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Health).
10. For most people the symptoms of Swine Flu are mild and tend to disappear in about 8 days so take care of yourself and be sensible. Follow your doctor's advice and stay home until you are given the all clear.
11. Be flexible: realise that it may not be possible for worship to take place in your usual place every week, but that centres may be designated to ensure that everyone has the opportunity still to attend.

## Swine Flu – FAQs

### **What is swine flu?**

Swine influenza is a disease in pigs. It does not normally affect humans but in this case it has because it has mutated (changed) and is now able to infect humans and spread from one person to another.

### **How is swine flu diagnosed?**

Swine flu is normally confirmed when the person has a positive swab test result but in the event of a serious outbreak people who have been in close contact with a confirmed case and have flu-like symptoms may be diagnosed without the need for a test.

### **Is the virus contagious?**

Yes. It spreads through the droplets that come out of the nose or mouth when someone coughs or sneezes. If you cough or sneeze cover your mouth with your hand and immediately wash your hand. If you don't wash your hand then you can leave the virus on any surface that you touch. It can live on a hard surface for 24 hours and a soft surface for 20 minutes.

### **What's the incubation period?**

Roughly 2 to 5 days but for many people it will be a shorter time.

### **When are people most infectious?**

Soon after they develop symptoms, although they can continue to be infectious for up to 5 days (or 7 days in children). Once symptoms are gone people are no longer considered to be infectious to others.

### **Should I avoid contact with people suspected of having swine flu?**

Yes and if you develop the condition yourself you'll be asked to stay home until you're clear of the infection.

### **What are the symptoms?**

They are similar to the regular seasonal flu that we see each year – fever, fatigue, lack of appetite and coughing. Most people will recover within a week.

### **Is it possible to catch flu twice?**

Yes, because the virus may mutate (change) and return later in the year in a different form. You may however have some 'cross protection' due to having encountered a similar virus previously.

### **What should I do if I think I'm infected?**

Stay at home and check your symptoms. Take advice from your health professionals / get in touch with your local GP. For more advice you can call NHS24 on 08454 242424.

(adapted from [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk))