

06 August 2009

Update on swine flu from Discovery Health

Recent media reports of the two confirmed deaths due to swine flu and the National Institute for Communicable Diseases' estimate that there are now 700 confirmed cases of swine flu in the country have raised concerns about the impact of this epidemic in South Africa.

The message however remains the same as previously communicated: there is no reason to panic. Most of the confirmed cases of swine flu are mild, with no substantial differences from normal seasonal flu.

Seasonal flu poses a greater risk than swine flu

Every year between 0.5 and 1% of people, who contract seasonal flu, die of complications. In the US more than 40 000 die every year due to the seasonal flu. The mortality rate for swine flu has thus far proven to be far lower than this.

Be informed

We all need to be informed about the situation and most importantly, you need to know what to do to protect yourself and your family.

If you are feeling ill with flu symptoms, you should consult a health professional. It is certainly not necessary to stay away from work to prevent catching flu, nor it is necessary to close down schools or places of work.

The signs and symptoms of swine flu are exactly the same as for those of seasonal flu. The treatment for symptoms is the same for most cases. Anyone who shows flu-like symptoms and is concerned should see a healthcare professional. This is especially important for people who are at a higher risk of contracting flu and the complications thereof. However, the Department of Health has confirmed that there is no need to be tested for swine flu, since the treatment for swine flu and regular flu are the same, and not everybody will need treatment. Treatment decisions should be taken by a healthcare professional.

People who fall into the high-risk category include people with chronic heart or lung disease, pregnant women and people with conditions that compromise one's immunity as well as young children and adults, particularly in institutions like school and universities. If you have any concerns about your and your family's health, please visit a healthcare professional.

We are up to date with the latest developments on the situation in South Africa

Discovery Health's Swine Flu Task Team is working closely with the National Institute of Communicable Diseases (NICD) and the Department of Health to manage the swine flu situation in South Africa.

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