



RoodlaneMedical

## Swine Flu – Advice to Clients

### 27 April 2009

The Director-General of the World Health Organisation, Margaret Chan, has confirmed that the latest outbreak of Swine Flu in Mexico and parts of United States is a new strain of a humanly transmissible influenza virus, A/H1N1, and has the potential to trigger an influenza pandemic.

The virus is the result of a re-assortment of components from other types of swine flu, bird flu and human flu viruses creating a new version of the influenza virus for which existing population immunity against other strains will be ineffective.

The WHO has convened its Pandemic Task Force. They will advise on whether it should raise its pandemic alert level from 3 to either 4 or 5. If the level is raised many nations will then implement pandemic health security measures. These would include travel restrictions, border closures, banning of public gatherings and issuing drugs to front-line healthcare staff.

The WHO has not raised this to a level 4 or 5 alert although it would appear from the available information very likely that significant human to human transmission is occurring. A decision to move to this level is serious with enormous social and economic implications. WHO will therefore be cautious but has already acknowledged human to human transmission.

#### **Our advice to our clients at the present time is as follows:**

CDC Atlanta – [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)  
WHO - [www.who.int](http://www.who.int)

are reliable sources of updated information of this emerging viral threat. We suggest that our clients monitor these sites and that they register for CDC updates.

The number of deaths in Mexico, given the mild nature of the disease where it is being monitored outside the country suggests to us that it is likely that the prevalence of swine flu in Mexico is much higher than has been notified by the authorities. This would be consistent with a comparatively low death rate for this condition and the milder symptoms that are being seen so far in cases picked up in travellers who have been to Mexico.

Our current advice to our clients is to monitor the situation closely. Restricting travel has not been recommended however you may wish to consider restricting all but essential travel to Mexico itself.

Anti virals, both Oseltamivir (tamiflu) and Zanamivir are both considered to be effective for this strain.

Any traveller returning from an area in which swine flu has been reported and who displays flu like symptoms should not come into work nor attend the doctor but should contact medical services by phone immediately and seek rapid access to anti viral medication.

As the situation develops companies may wish to consider asking travellers returning from the highest risk areas in Mexico to work from home for seven days regardless of symptoms.

General measures include meticulous personal hygiene and maintaining a distance of 6ft from other people. These measures should be observed by anyone in high risk areas who may also wish to consider utilising a face mask which must reach FDA or comparable standards.

We will continue to provide updates.

**Key messages for businesses:**

- There is no vaccine for this type of flu as it is a new virus. Vaccines are not likely to be available for several months.
- The virus appears to be sensitive to antiviral medications and early treatment is effective.
- Travel restrictions are not currently formally recommended but should be considered at a company and individual level.
- Anyone returning from an area where swine flu has been reported should contact health services if they have any symptoms of flu such as fever, headache, cough or cold like symptoms or gastrointestinal disturbance.
- You should review your business planning for a pandemic scenario

**Contact details:**

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