

What is the National Pandemic Flu Service and how does it work?

The National Pandemic Flu Service is a new self-care service that will give people with the symptoms of swine flu fast access to information and antivirals.

It is a [dedicated website](http://www.direct.gov.uk/pandemicflu) <http://www.direct.gov.uk/pandemicflu> and phone line (0800 1 513 100 or textphone 0800 1 513 200) for people to get information, check their symptoms and get a unique number that will give them access to antivirals, if necessary.

When you are given your unique access number, you will be told where your nearest antiviral collection point is. You should then ask a flu friend – a healthy friend or relative – to go and pick up the antiviral medication.

If you think you have swine flu, do **not** go out to your GP or A&E.

Collecting antivirals?

The flu friend must show their own ID as well as that of the patient. The authorisation number and ID information will be checked to ensure it matches the information provided when the assessment of symptoms was completed.

Acceptable ID includes a utility bill, passport, a credit or debit card, driving licence or NHS card.

Why has the government brought in this new service?

This new service will free up GPs, enabling them to deal with other patients with illnesses that need urgent attention.

Is there anyone who shouldn't use the National Pandemic Flu Service?

You should contact your doctor directly rather than using the National Pandemic Flu Service if:

- you have a serious underlying illness
- you are pregnant
- you have a sick child under one year of age
- your condition **suddenly** gets much worse or
- your condition is still getting worse after seven days (five for a child).

What should I do if I think I have swine flu?

If you are concerned that you may have swine flu, follow these simple steps:

- Stay at home and check your symptoms using the [National Pandemic Flu Service](#)
- Call your GP directly if you are in any of the high-risk groups (above).

In the meantime, take paracetamol-based cold remedies to reduce fever and other symptoms, drink plenty of fluids and get lots of rest.

What can I do?

You can reduce, but not eliminate, the risk of catching or spreading swine flu by:

- Covering your nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing
- Disposing of dirty tissues promptly and carefully
- Maintaining good basic hygiene, such as washing hands frequently with soap and warm water to reduce the spread of the virus from your hands to face, or to other people
- Cleaning hard surfaces, such as door handles, frequently using a normal cleaning product.

You should also prepare by:

- **Confirming a network of 'flu friends'** – friends and relatives – who could help you if you fall ill. They could collect medicines and other supplies for you so you do not have to leave home and possibly spread the virus.
- **Knowing your NHS number and those of other family members.** It is not essential to have your NHS number in order to receive treatment, but it can help NHS staff to find your health records. You will be able to find your NHS Number on your medical card or other items such as prescribed medication, GP letter or hospital appointment card/letter.
- **Making sure you have a thermometer and adequate quantities of cold and cough remedies** in your medicine cupboard in case you or your family are affected by swine flu.