

NHS staff in England

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Dear colleague,

### **Swine flu pandemic: launch of the National Pandemic Flu Service**

Following my update to you on 16 July, the National Pandemic Flu Service (NPFS) was launched this afternoon (23 July). This is a new self-care service with online and phone access that allows you to assess your symptoms and access antivirals if required, or read advice on symptom-relief. This service is only intended for people who are ill with swine flu.

Those people with serious underlying illness, who are pregnant or whose condition suddenly worsens should consult their GP if they are concerned they have swine flu.

Parents or carers of children under the age of one should consult their GP straight away if they are concerned that the child may have swine flu.

So far, the vast majority of swine flu cases have been mild, with symptoms similar to seasonal flu. Only in a small number of cases have people had more serious symptoms, including some people who have sadly died.

To access the new service, people should first visit the National Pandemic Flu Service website at [www.direct.gov.uk/pandemicflu](http://www.direct.gov.uk/pandemicflu). This website will be available 24 hours a day and is designed to identify the symptoms of swine flu and to provide authorisation to access antivirals. Two telephone lines are also available, and will be open from 8am – midnight. People should call 0800 1 513 513 for **information** and 0800 1 513 100 for **treatment**. A textphone number is available on 0800 1 513 200. Only people with symptoms of swine flu should use the National Pandemic Flu Service.

People diagnosed with swine flu will be given an authorisation code that a 'flu friend' – a friend or relative who does not have swine flu – can use to pick up antivirals from a local Antiviral Collection Point (ACP). People will have to provide their personal details when they contact the National Pandemic Flu Service and their flu friend will need to take personal ID as well as the patient's ID with them when they go to collect the antivirals. We are working with organisations such as the Red Cross to meet the needs of people who may be isolated or otherwise find it difficult to identify a flu friend.

I understand that this might be a worrying time for all NHS staff, balancing demanding work pressures with potential concerns about family and friends. I am asking your Chief Executives, Boards and Directors to ensure that they look after your wellbeing during this stressful pandemic period.

You will shortly begin to see nationally placed advertising and media to promote the National Pandemic Flu Service. Posters will be available to put up at GP surgeries and in A&E departments to advise people how to use the National Pandemic Flu Service.

A new section of the Department of Health's website will now host all information and guidance for NHS professionals on pandemic flu. This information can be found at <http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publichealth/Flu/Swineflu/InformationandGuidance/index.htm>.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of you again for the excellent work you have done so far in responding to the early stages of this pandemic. Those of you working on the response to the pandemic have helped ensure that the NHS is acting in the most effective way to treat, support and reassure patients and the public. And those of you not directly responding to the pandemic have shown commendable flexibility to support your colleagues and to ensure we are providing all patients – both flu and non-flu – with high quality care.

We will continue to work closely with your organisations to ensure that you receive up-to-date advice and information to help us all continue to manage this pandemic in the best way possible.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D Nicholson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

**David Nicholson CBE**  
**NHS Chief Executive**