

Children under 1 year old with flu-like symptoms should be seen and assessed by GPs to exclude other serious treatable diseases, to establish the severity of illness and assess whether additional treatment is required (e.g. oral antibiotics). Some older children may need face-to-face assessment

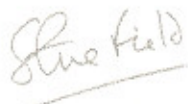
We would like to take this opportunity to express our admiration for the way in which GPs and practice teams have responded to the challenge of coping with the large increase in telephone and face-to-face consultations for swine flu, especially over the previous few weeks. We realise that there has been considerable pressure on GPs to be able to respond quickly to all the requests for telephone consultations, appointments and visits and that the vast majority of children and families have had a rapid and effective response from their GPs and practice teams.

We would like to take this opportunity to remind you of the current guidance for assessing children with a possible diagnosis of swine flu.

All children under 1 year old with flu-like symptoms should be seen and assessed by GPs to exclude other serious treatable diseases, to establish the severity of infection and assess whether additional treatment is required (e.g. oral antibiotics). However, we have recently become aware of a small number of cases where existing guidance (http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_100361) on treatment of children has not been applied and babies under one have had antivirals authorised without having been seen by a GP. Young children are considered to be at particular risk of severe influenza and the complications of influenza. It is also recognised that the diagnosis of flu in young children is difficult.

During this large increase in illness in the community we need to continue to be aware that other serious conditions in children may present with flu-like symptoms, but are not in fact caused by flu. Where parents or carers contact GPs with specific concerns about children of any age, they should assess these children as they would normally, where clinical capacity allows. As clinicians are aware when there is no flu epidemic or pandemic, serious conditions in children can on occasion initially be diagnosed as acute viral infections based on the presenting features. The current situation, with large numbers of calls and visits to be dealt with, makes the distinction between flu and other conditions that require urgent intervention even more difficult than in normal circumstances. It is therefore important that GPs and other health professionals bear in mind that any child, particularly a young child can deteriorate quite rapidly. Repeated calls from concerned families or carers may be an indication that a child should be seen face-to-face as quickly as the situation allows.

As the swine flu outbreak evolves, we hope to learn more about the clinical features of this illness in children and to quickly disseminate important clinical information to GPs and to others. We hope you have found this letter useful.



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