

26 August 2009

<p>INFORMATION FOR PARENTS - FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS -</p>
--

There have been cases of swine flu in my child's school (or early years and childcare setting) but it has remained open. Should I send my child in?

While schools and settings remain open, we **strongly** urge parents to continue to send their children there — unless they have any symptoms of flu. Parents will be advised if the school or setting is to close and what to do then.

My child has a history of other medical problems and I believe he or she is at greater risk should they catch swine flu. Is it safe for my child to go to school or setting while there have been cases of swine flu there? And are there other precautions that I should take?

Your child should continue to attend school or setting unless they have any flu-like symptoms. If they display any symptoms you should keep them at home and, given their other medical conditions, you should contact your GP for advice and treatment as soon as possible.

Is it better for children to catch swine flu now in order to build up their resilience to potentially more harmful strains in the future?

No. We are still learning about this strain of swine flu and who is most at risk of complications. The Health Protection Agency therefore strongly advises people to avoid intentionally infecting themselves, or their children, with the virus, for their own safety and the safety of any vulnerable people they may unintentionally infect.

Even with mild flu, complications can occur, leading to more serious illness. With this in mind, it would be wrong not to take all necessary precautions against swine flu and limit its spread.

What could working parents do if their child's school or childcare setting was closed for an extended period? Would they have to stay off work?

We appreciate that closures would present a challenge for working parents, which is why we advise that closures should take place only in exceptional circumstances. However, we believe parents would agree with a closure decision taken to reduce a significant threat to their children's wellbeing.

In the case of closure, parents would have to make other arrangements for looking after their children. Some might be able to work from home, work flexible or shorter hours, or make informal childcare arrangements with a relative or friend.

Could employers with a significant proportion of parent workers establish their own childcare provision?

There are no current plans to close group childcare settings en masse. If this were to happen, it would also apply to any newly established nursery set up by an employer as much as to any other establishment, so it would not be helpful for employers to do this. Also, any such new facility would have to be registered with Ofsted, which could not be completed at very short notice; they would have to check that relevant safety, welfare and other requirements are met before confirming registration.

Parent workers staying off work to look after children will have a severe impact on the economy and on essential services.

We have drawn this issue to the attention of employers so that they can plan for this eventuality. It would have an impact on all sectors, but with good planning we believe that impact to be manageable.

More general advice and guidance for parents can be found on **Directgov**.

Last updated: 26 August 2009

South East Essex Primary Care Trust

Harcourt House, 5-15 Harcourt Avenue, Southend-on-Sea, SS2 6HE
Tel: 01702 224600, Fax: 01702 226401, Email: info@see-pct.nhs.uk
Website: www.see.nhs.uk