

GUIDELINES IN THE EVENT OF A SWINE FLU OUTBREAK IN MOSQUES

WHAT IS SWINE FLU?

Swine flu is a type of influenza caused by a virus subtype H1N1 believed to have originated from swine. It originated from Mexico but has since spread to many countries across the world. It passes from human to human by physical contact, coughing or sneezing. The World Health Organization has stated that symptoms may even be less severe than seasonal influenza symptoms, and therefore it is important not to panic should one be diagnosed with swine flu, however urgent steps must be taken to prevent it spreading. Medical researchers worldwide recognize that the swine flu virus can mutate into something more deadly. Therefore, Governments are carefully watching the latest 2009 outbreak of swine flu and making contingency plans for a possible global pandemic.

The Government's Chief Medical Officer has stated that new cases of swine flu could rise to 100,000 newly diagnosed patients a day by the end of August. This would coincide with the beginning of the Holy Month of Ramadhan, where worshippers would be vulnerable to catching swine flu due to the close contact they have with other worshippers who may be infected. It is therefore extremely important for all Mosques and Muslims to be especially cautious and follow procedures to prevent the spread of swine flu.

HOW IS SWINE FLU SPREAD?

Like any other influenza, swine flu spreads between humans through coughing or sneezing and people touching an object with the virus on it and then

touching their own nose or mouth. The swine flu in humans is most contagious during the first five days of the illness although some people, most commonly children, can remain contagious for up to ten days.

HOW CAN PLACES OF MUSLIM GATHERINGS BE AT POSSIBLE RISK?

Some ways in which swine flu can be spread in Muslim settings are:

- Public gatherings and worship in Mosques, such as Friday Prayers.
- Private and Public gatherings in houses and mosques for breaking of the fast in Ramadhan.
- Public celebrations such as Eid.
- Weddings and engagements.
- General public spaces like schools, work, libraries, gyms, shops, and public transport.

Whilst close contact with others in a confined space inside a Mosque, community centre or house can accelerate swine flu, there is little direct evidence of the benefits of cancelling such gatherings among healthy people. You will need to assess the risk according to government advice and local conditions, whilst considering the needs of your local Mosque or community centre.



HOW CAN WE PREVENT THE SPREAD OF THE VIRUS?

PREVENTION AT MOSQUES AND COMMUNITY CENTRES

Local Mosques may want to undertake risk assessments of how they can reduce the spread of infection. The following can be considered for risk assessment by each Mosque management:

- Ensuring that hand hygiene facilities are adequate and working properly.
- Installing automatic dryers and foot operated waste bins. Also ensuring that the mosque has adequate stocks of tissues, liquid soap in bathrooms and toilets for use during public gatherings, and their appropriate disposal.
- Supplying disposable tissue towels as opposed to fabric towels.
- Assessing the adequacy of the provision of hand washing facilities.
- Considering the use of hand cleansers, for example at the entrances to rooms without hand-washing facilities.
- Checking that there are supervised procedures for isolating anyone who falls ill during a visit to the Mosque.
- Sharing of food and drink should be avoided including sharing plates, cups, spoons and sharing any other items of cutlery should be avoided.
- Distributing literature and spread awareness to the congregation about the need for particular care in hygiene due to the outbreak of swine flu.

- Inviting GPs from your congregation to talk to the community and offer general advice on precautionary measures relating to prevention, symptoms and help.
- Those working in Mosques should avoid spreading the virus to healthy residents by introducing strict infection control measures. Those distributing food and dates, for example, should wear clean disposable gloves.

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS THAT NEED TO BE CONSIDERED IN UNDERTAKING A LOCAL RISK ASSESSMENT OF SWINE FLU INCLUDE:

- What contingency plans are in place should swine flu spread to members of the congregation?
- Are there adequate cleaning schedules for the cleaning of toilet and wudhu facilities?

RECORDING OF RISK ASSESSMENT:

Once a mosque has undertaken a risk assessment, the actions taken should be recorded.



ADVICE TO THOSE ATTENDING MOSQUES AND COMMUNITY CENTRES:

As in any situation where people come into close contact, good hygiene precautions should be adhered to. Some simple measures will help.

- If displaying symptoms of flu, you should contact The National Pandemic Flu Service.
- Avoid attending the mosque or community centre if you are diagnosed and display symptoms of swine flu. Remaining home is the advice recommended by health professionals to avoid its spread.
- Avoid close contact (e.g. hugging, kissing, shaking hands) with those who are displaying symptoms.
- Preferably use toilet facilities and perform wudhu at home rather than at the mosque.
- The use of fabric towels should be avoided. Disposable towels should be used and then disposed appropriately.
- Avoid using stagnant water in watering jugs both for wudhu and for use in the toilet. If fresh water is not available in the toilet, ensure that the jug is emptied, cleaned and refilled each time with fresh water.
- Avoid using public prayer mats, public rosary-beads and religious books available for public use in the mosque if displaying symptoms.

PREVENTION AT HOME:

- Use a tissue to cover your nose and mouth when coughing and/or sneezing.
- Dispose of the tissue promptly and then wash your hands.
- Clean hands frequently with liquid soap and water, especially after coughing, sneezing, and using tissues.
- Minimise touching your mouth, eyes and/or nose, unless you have recently cleaned your hands.
- Clean surfaces frequently touched by hands; normal household detergent and water will be adequate for this.
- Clean your hands as soon as you arrive home.
- If you suspect or have been diagnosed of swine flu, it would be best to stay at home.



SYMPTOMS OF SWINE FLU

These vary from individual to individual in terms of the number and severity of symptoms. The symptoms are generally the same as those as normal flu, however they can be more severe and may cause more serious complications.

TYPICAL SYMPTOMS INCLUDE:

- A Sudden Fever (temperature above 38°C)
- A Sudden Cough

OTHER SYMPTOMS MAY INCLUDE:

- Headache,
- tiredness,
- chills,
- aching muscles,
- limb or joint pain,
- diarrhea or stomach upset,
- sore throat,
- runny nose,
- sneezing, and
- loss of appetite.

If you have flu-like symptoms and are concerned that you may have swine flu, the NHS recommends the following among others:

Read up on swine flu symptoms

www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Pandemic-flu/Pages/Symptoms.aspx

Stay at home and check your condition at the National Pandemic Flu Service www.pandemicflu.direct.gov.uk

You should call your GP directly if:

- You have a serious underlying illness
- You are pregnant
- You have a sick child under one year old
- Your condition suddenly gets much worse
- Your condition is still getting worse after seven days (or five days for a child).

Note: The National Pandemic Flu Service is a self-care service that will assess your symptoms and, if required, provide an authorisation number to you which can be used to collect antiviral medication from a local collection point.

National Pandemic Flu Service:

www.pandemicflu.direct.gov.uk

Tel: 0800 1 513 513 Minicom: 0800 1 513 200

FOR UPDATES ON THE SITUATION:

Directgov: www.direct.gov.uk/swineflu

Tel: 0800 1 513 100 Minicom: 0800 1 513 200

England: www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk

Tel: 0845 4647 Minicom: 0845 6064647

Scotland: www.nhs24.com

Tel: 08454 242424 Textphone: 0800 22 44 88

Wales: www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk

Tel: 0845 4647 Minicom: 0845 6064647

Swine flu symptoms:

www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Pandemic-flu/Pages/Symptoms.aspx

DCLG guidelines for faith communities:

www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/influzapandemic

For any other help or assistance, please contact:

MINAB, 20-22 Creffield Road, Ealing, London W5 3RP

Telephone: 020 8993 7141

Website: www.minab.org.uk

Email: info@minab.org.uk



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