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**Home Isolation: Instructions for Patients
with Suspect, Probable and Confirmed Influenza**

Dear Patient,

You are suspected of having or were diagnosed recently with influenza (flu). This might be or is thought to be swine influenza (swine origin H1N1 influenza). Influenza can be transmitted when an infected person coughs or sneezes. It is also possible to become infected by touching surfaces contaminated with the virus, and then touching your own nose or mouth. Covering coughs and sneezes and washing hands with soap and water or with an alcohol-based hand rub are essential in stopping the spread of influenza.

During the period that you have symptoms, especially fever, it is possible for you to transmit this virus to those who have close contact with you (for example, someone living with or caring for you). To help prevent transmission of influenza virus to your close contacts, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health is asking you to **stay at home for 7 days after the day you developed a fever or for 24 - 48 hours after all symptoms resolve, whichever is longer.**

During that time, please follow these guidelines:

YOU SHOULD:

- **Stay at home for 7 days after the first day of fever or at least 24 - 48 hours after all symptoms resolve, whichever is longer.**
- Limit contact with others; avoid close contact. Persons living in the home with you should limit contact with you to the extent possible. Consider designating one person (not someone who is pregnant) as the primary person who will care for you while you're sick.
- If possible, stay in a room separate from the common areas of the house. (For example, a spare bedroom, if that's possible.)
- **ALWAYS** cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when sneezing, coughing or blowing your nose (or cough and sneeze into the inside of your elbow). Never cough in the direction of someone else.
- **ALWAYS** wash your hands with soap or water or use alcohol-based hand rubs after coughing or sneezing or throwing a used tissue in the garbage.
- Throw out your used tissues with your regular garbage.
- Do not touch your nose, face or eyes after coughing or sneezing.
- While the virus is likely not spread very well from contact with soiled household surfaces, cleaning of surfaces that are frequently touched (such as door knobs, telephones or any other object that you sneeze or cough on) may help prevent transmission. Clean all hard surfaces such as bedside tables, bathroom surfaces, doorknobs, and childrens' toys with a standard household disinfectant. If surfaces are visibly dirty use a household cleaner first, then a disinfectant. Wash your hands after cleaning the area.

- Dirty dishes and eating utensils should be washed in a dishwasher or by hand with warm water and soap.
- Laundry can be washed in a standard washing machine with warm or cold water and detergent. Linens and towels should also be tumble dried on a hot setting. It is not necessary to separate soiled linen and laundry your laundry from other household laundry.
- Get plenty of rest.
- Drink clear fluids (such as water, broth, sports drinks, electrolyte beverages for infants) to keep from being dehydrated.
- Seek medical care right away if your symptoms worsen (see below).

INSTRUCTIONS FOR CLOSE CONTACTS:

- **All persons in the household, especially those who must come in close contact with the sick person should clean their hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub frequently and after every contact with the sick person.**
- Household members should monitor themselves closely for the development of influenza-like symptoms for 7 days after last contact. If they get sick with fever, cough, or sore throat, they should stay at home and take the same precautions listed above.
- Sick persons should not have visitors while they are ill with influenza or an influenza-like illness. If anyone who does not live with the patient must enter the home, they should avoid contact with the sick person.
- If someone else is washing the used linens (such as bed sheets and towels) for the sick person, they should use household laundry soap and tumble dry on a hot setting. Avoid “hugging” laundry prior to washing it to prevent self-contamination and clean hands with soap and water or alcohol-based hand rub right after handling dirty laundry.

IF I AM SICK DO I NEED TO TAKE MEDICINE?

You should only take medicine if your doctor prescribes it for you. For people with certain underlying medical conditions, a medicine called either Tamiflu™ or Relenza™ may be recommended. You should consult with your doctor to see if you need medicine. You should also rest, drink plenty of liquids, and take medications that you would normally take to treat your symptoms, such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen.

People who are under 18 years of age should NOT take aspirin or aspirin-containing products as this can cause a rare serious illness called Reye Syndrome in young people with the flu.

WHAT TO DO IF YOUR SYMPTOMS WORSEN

If your symptoms worsen, especially if you begin to have trouble breathing, you should call your doctor or seek help at an emergency room. When going to the doctor’s office or the emergency room, you should have a family member or friend drive you in a private car. Do NOT take public transportation (subway or bus).

If you go to your doctor, please contact your doctor before you leave your home and tell the doctor you have influenza-like symptoms. After arriving, go straight to the receptionist or triage nurse so that you can be put in a private room while you wait to see the doctor. You may be asked to wear a mask and you should sit away from others as much as possible. If you call an ambulance to take you to the hospital, let the operator know that you have influenza-like symptoms, and also let the ambulance crew know when they arrive.

SHOULD PERSONS I LIVE WITH OR OTHER CLOSE CONTACTS TAKE MEDICINE TO PREVENT SWINE FLU?

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health is recommending preventive medication for household or other close contacts who have an underlying condition (such as certain chronic medical conditions, being immunocompromised, being younger than 2 or older than 65) that may put them at risk for more severe illness. To find out whether preventive medication such as oseltamivir (Tamiflu®) is recommended, call a doctor.

WHERE TO GET MORE INFORMATION

For more information, call your doctor, call 211, or visit the following websites that have information about swine flu: www.mass.gov/dph/swineflu and www.cdc.gov