

Health and Safety Advice for Students and Staff

Influenza

The probability that there will be an influenza pandemic in the near future is increasing. Meanwhile a number of sporadic cases will result from the more common "winter influenza". Flu vaccine is available and can be successful in preventing or reducing the severity of this type of flu but at the present time is available only to those considered vulnerable (older age group and those with chronic illnesses). As yet a vaccine is not available to deal with whatever virus may result in a possible pandemic (including Avian Flu) and supply of appropriate antiviral medication is at present limited.

The symptoms of flu may include:-

- Headache
- Sore throat
- Muscular aches
- Conjunctivitis
- Severe weakness and fatigue
- Fever
- Cough
- Respiratory problems
- Runny nose

How is flu contracted:-

- Close contact with infected person usually via droplet infection

Who is vulnerable?

- The elderly together with those suffering from chronic illnesses, especially where the immunity is suppressed. Additionally, in a pandemic it is considered that young children may be especially vulnerable.

Reducing the risk

- Maintain good basic hygiene eg washing hands to prevent the virus spreading from hand to face etc.
- Covering nose and mouth when coughing and sneezing.
- Avoiding crowds where possible.

Simple remedies if flu is suspected:

- Stay at home to avoid spreading the virus to others.
- Take simple over-the-counter medication remedies (to relieve symptoms) such as paracetamol etc.
- Drink plenty of fluids.
- If you are concerned that your condition is deteriorating it is appropriate to contact your GP (in the case of a pandemic there may be other contact points indicated).
- For further information/advice please contact the Department of Health website www.dh.gov.uk/pandemicflu and additionally the University Occupational Health Service is available for help.