

NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY

Swine 'flu: questions and answers for students

As a prospective or current student of Newcastle University, you may have questions to ask about how the University is dealing with the swine 'flu pandemic. We hope that the information below will answer them. We will update this guidance if the situation changes. Please go to <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/occupationalhealth> to check for updates.

Current Position

On 11 June the World Health Organisation raised its alert to Level 6, recognising that A (H1N1) swine flu has spread to pandemic levels around the globe. The UK has now moved from virus containment into a treatment phase to manage the current pandemic flu outbreak. The University is currently operating normally and aims to continue to do so.

Frequently Asked Questions

I have a place at Newcastle University for September 2009. Given the pandemic, should I still come?

- Yes, the University aims to operate normally throughout the pandemic.

I'm coming to Newcastle from another country. Is it safe to come to the UK? Will I be quarantined on arrival?

- It is safe to come to the UK. We have an excellent National Health Service who will provide effective treatment should you become ill. You will not be quarantined on arrival, nor will you have your temperature taken at the airport. We strongly recommend that you register with a General Practitioner (a local family doctor) as soon as you arrive. You can find a list of doctors at: http://www.ncl.ac.uk/students/wellbeing/medical/doctor_dental.htm. The University provides comprehensive orientation sessions during Welcome Week for international students and we will provide the latest advice on your arrival at University.

I'm a current student. Should I return in September as normal?

- Yes. We're looking forward to having you back.

During the holidays someone in my family has had swine flu. Can I still return to Newcastle?

- Yes, the medical advice is that unless you have flu-like symptoms yourself, it is fine to attend classes. This also applies to students in healthcare settings.

I've got swine flu now and am receiving treatment. What should I do about returning to Newcastle and to classes?

- You should not return to classes until you have completed the course of treatment and are symptom free.

Isn't it dangerous to be mixing with so many other people at University in classes, halls of residence and so on?

- The UK is now concentrating on treating swine flu rather than trying to prevent people from getting it. You are as safe at University as you are anywhere. Please remember too that in the vast majority of cases, symptoms are very mild and you will recover quickly. As mentioned above, you can do two key things to help:

- Register with a doctor.
- Observe good hygiene – catch it, bin it, kill it.

What if I get swine flu and miss registration and induction?

- Don't worry. Please contact your School or Degree Programme Director if you will be absent. We'll then be able to make the necessary arrangements for you to register once you're better and you'll soon catch up. Don't forget that you can complete most of your registration on-line at - <https://s3p.ncl.ac.uk/login/index.aspx>. Information will be sent to you from August 7th.

I'm back in Newcastle and have flu-like symptoms. What should I do?

- Stay at home and check your symptoms at the <https://www.pandemicflu.direct.gov.uk/>

- For those who do not have internet access, the same service can be accessed by telephone on Telephone: 0800 1 513 100 or Minicom: 0800 1 513 200

- This service will assess your symptoms and, if required, provide an authorisation number for antiviral medication

- Ask a healthy friend or relative to pick up your antiviral medication from one of the designated local collection points (see website)

- The person collecting the antivirals **must bring proof** of both their own and the patient's identity with them to the Antiviral Collection Point. A list of the type of documentation required (see website)

- In the meantime, take paracetamol-based cold remedies to reduce fever and other symptoms, drink plenty of fluids and get lots of rest.

- Call your doctor 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)

- Students who are not registered with a local GP (family doctor) should register as soon as possible. Further information on the main medical practices in Newcastle can be found at

http://www.ncl.ac.uk/students/wellbeing/medical/doctor_dental.htm

- Do NOT go to a hospital, walk-in health centre or your doctor's surgery if you suspect you have swine flu, unless you are advised to do so by a healthcare professional, as you could infect others.

- Help reduce the spread of infection by following basic hygiene rules: cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you sneeze or cough, dispose of the tissue immediately and then wash your hands thoroughly.

The guidance says that I should find a flu friend who can help me if I'm ill, but I'm new to the University and don't have any friends yet. What shall I do?

- If you are in University accommodation, you can be pretty sure that help will be available there, but do make sure that people know you are ill. If you are living alone, approach a fellow student NOW and ask them if you could be mutual flu friends. Exchange contact details and work out how you can help each other. If you're in a shared house or flat, agree to look after each other. Make sure you have back-up arrangements though in case you all fall ill at once. If all these arrangements fail, and you need further assistance, please contact your School Office.

What do I need to do if I'm absent from class due to swine flu?

- You should let your School or Degree Programme Director know that you are ill. Try to obtain a sick note (a letter explaining your illness) from your doctor if you are absent for more than seven days, including weekends. This may be difficult, so keep records/copies of any documents issued to you eg your authorisation number for antiviral medication, to prove you have had swine 'flu.

What if I miss exams or other assessments because I'm ill?

- Again, don't worry. We will put arrangements in place to ensure that you aren't disadvantaged. Make sure your School knows as soon as you are ill and also keep records / copies of documents issued to you which show you've had swine 'flu. (see answer above)

I heard that transport might be affected if bus, Metro and train drivers go down with swine flu. What should I do then?

- Try to get to class by alternative means, but if this is impossible let University staff know why you are absent.

In addition to being a student, I'm also a parent/carer of children or dependant relatives. What shall I do if schools are closed or they become ill and I need to miss classes to look after them?

- Families must come first in such circumstances and we will be sympathetic, but remember to keep appropriate University staff updated and informed.

What if I'm ill when the time comes to graduate?

- You and your family will be able to attend a ceremony at a later date. If you're booked for a graduation and fall ill as the date approaches, please ring the Congregations Team (Tel: 0191 222 6117/6126) to let them know that you won't be attending.

Can you tell me if my friend / son / daughter who is a student at Newcastle is ill, or give me their phone number so that I can get in touch with them?

- We can take messages and pass them on, but please remember that personal information is still covered by the Data Protection Act. It might be the case that the student does not wish to be in contact with the individual calling.

Where can I find up-to-date and accurate general information about swine flu?

- Please go to the University website at: <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/occupationalhealth/> for general information. If you have specific questions which relate to your degree programme, please ask your School or Degree Programme Director.

What can I do to assist both myself and the University at this time?

- Please ensure that we have accurate and comprehensive contact details for you as we may need to get urgent messages to you if, for example, a class has to be cancelled because the lecturer is ill.

- Please look out for your fellow students and be prepared to help them, even if you don't know them well. Please remember that international students will be unfamiliar with the UK health system and help guide them through it.

- Stock up NOW on essentials such as paracetamol-based cold remedies, tissues, loo rolls, soup and refreshing drinks/Dioralyte and don't forget to have an interesting book or two to read when you're feeling a little better.

- Above all, remember that swine flu symptoms are mild and most people will recover quickly. In short, keep a sense of perspective.