



10 March 2016

**Letter to: DsPH for circulation to Nursing and Residential Homes and CCG for circulation to General Practitioners**

Dear Colleague,

**Re: Influenza like Illness Preparedness**

You will doubtless be aware of increasing cases of influenza like illness (ILI) in the community, and the pressures this is putting on nursing homes, with knock on pressure on NHS services. The attached letter has been prepared for nursing and residential homes and which you may wish to send it to them, or may prefer to use its contents for your own communications.

The Chief Medical Officer for England has indicated as of the 7<sup>th</sup> January 2016 that as the influenza virus is now widely circulating, Anti-virals may be prescribed on the basis of a clinical suspicion that the illness is influenza like illness. You should consider prescribing antiviral medicines for patients if they are at risk of severe illness and/or complications from influenza if not treated, whether or not they are in a 'clinical at risk group'. The use of antiviral medicines is supported by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE). Their guidance on the use of antiviral medicines can be accessed at: <http://guidance.nice.org.uk/TA168> for treatment, and <http://guidance.nice.org.uk/TA158> for prophylaxis.

Nationwide surveillance data indicate an increased likelihood that people presenting with an ILI are infected with influenza virus and provide the basis for using antivirals for appropriate patients presenting with ILI in the community.

There is no clinical indication for any additional extra ordinary measure to take just because the identified influenza strain is the former, H1N1 Swine flu pandemic strain. The H1N1 strain is now classed as a normal seasonal influenza strain. Influenza vaccine and antivirals for appropriate target groups remain key interventions to reduce the health impact of influenza.

Yours sincerely,

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