



COPPERBELT UNIVERSITY PUBLIC HEALTH AND HIV/AIDS PROGRAMMES OFFICE

SUBJECT : H1N1 (Swine Flu) Alert Reminder!

The World Health Organization (WHO) has declared H1N1 (swine flu) as a pandemic following its wide spread detection in many regions of the world.

What is H1N1?

This is a type A influenza virus present in pigs. Human infection is usually uncommon except among people who work and live closely with pigs.

What is unusual about the present strain?

The new strain is a hybrid of swine, human and avian flu viruses and can spread from human to human but the level of virulence is not yet clear.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms are similar to regular human flu: fever and chills, a cough, sore throat, aching limbs, headaches, and general malaise. However, there are reports of swine flu also causing diarrhoea and vomiting. Pneumonia and respiratory failure can occur leading to death.

Are there any drugs to treat swine flu?

Oseltamivir (Tamiflu) and zanamivir (Relenza) are the possible pharmaceutical frontline defence and are proving effective in treating patients diagnosed early enough. There is no vaccine. The ministry of health in Zambia has already received some consignments of the drugs.

Situation Analysis

Cases have already been confirmed in many parts of the world including the developing countries in Africa.

How can we prevent the spread of swine flu?

People at risk should cover their mouth when they cough. They should regularly wash their hands with an alcohol-based cleaner and avoid close contact with the sick. Patients with the disease should stay at home. There is no need to avoid eating pork.

The ministry of health in collaboration with partners has put in place surveillance measures in all exit points.