

Travel Warning on swine flu

30th April, 2009

The current swine influenza outbreak which was first detected in Mexico has been raised to a phase 5 pandemic alert by the WHO.

“Phase 5 is characterized by human-to-human spread of the virus into at least two countries in one WHO region. While most countries are not affected at this stage, the declaration of Phase 5 is a strong signal that a pandemic is imminent and WHO has advised that all countries need to have contingency measures in place.”

Since the number of countries affected is increasing daily the Ministry of Health is concerned that travel to affected countries will increase the risk of importation of the disease into Bhutan.

Ministry of Health Recommendations

The Ministry of Health, Royal Government of Bhutan, recommends that all Bhutanese avoid nonessential travel to countries affected by the swine flu.

- If travel to an affected country is unavoidable, stay informed by checking global updates, local government and health announcements, follow local public health guidelines and prevention instructions.
- Consider health insurance while traveling so that your medical care and evacuation are covered in case you become sick.

To protect yourself, practice general preventive measures for influenza:

- Avoid close contact with people who appear unwell and who have fever and cough (Influenza is spread mainly person-to-person through coughing or sneezing of infected people).
- Wash your hands with soap and water frequently and thoroughly, especially after coughing or sneezing.
- Cover your mouth and nose with disposable tissues when coughing and sneezing and dispose of the used tissues properly.
- Take care to cover your nose and mouth during travel.
- Practice good health habits including adequate sleep and eating nutritious food

If you feel sick, seek medical care

- If you are ill with fever and other symptoms of swine flu such as cough and sore throat, see a doctor, especially if you think you may have had contact with someone with swine flu or severe respiratory illness in the past 7 days before becoming ill.
- Do not travel while you are sick, except to get local medical care.

- Try to limit contact with others as much as possible. By limiting your contact with other people, you can help prevent the spread of swine flu.

If you are returning from an area that has reported cases of swine flu:

- Closely monitor your health for 7 days.
- If you become ill with fever and other symptoms of swine flu like cough and sore throat, seek medical care immediately from the nearest hospital. At the hospital inform the health worker about your travel history and contact with person/s infected with swine flu, if any.

Symptoms of swine flu

- High Fever
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Headache
- Lethargy
- Joint ache
- Runny nose

Nausea and Diarrhoea have also been found in some cases.

For updates and information related to swine flu please visit the health website:

www.health.gov.bt