



VANTAGECARE HEALTH ALERT 05/01/2009

The World Health Organization has increased the flu alert to Level 5, the second highest level, which is an indication that there has been human-to-human spread of virus in at least two countries in one region. Although there have been no confirmed cases in the Northeast Louisiana area, the CDC is recommending these, among other, helpful tips to lessen your risk of infection from the flu: (1) Avoid close contact with others, (2) Stay at home when you are sick, (3) Cover your mouth and nose when you cough/sneeze, (4) Wash your hands often, (5) Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.¹

Also, concerns about the availability of the antiviral drugs commonly prescribed by physicians for influenza, specifically the H1N1 “swine flu” are spreading. Some members may be wondering what will happen if they suddenly get sick and get a prescription for the flu. At Vantage Health Plan, we would like you to be well informed and confident in knowing that any member with a valid prescription for one of the antiviral drugs used to treat “swine flu,” Tamiflu or Relenza, will be able to take it to a pharmacy and have it filled for the recommended and FDA indicated 10 days of therapy – this is a normal course of therapy. If a member requires more than the usual course of therapy, their physician’s office merely places a call to Vantage Health Plan to gain an authorization for the extended quantity. There is no lack of prompt access to these medications by the members of Vantage Health Plan.

There are normal quantity limits in place to prevent overuse which include:

Relenza 5mg - #20 inhalations (10 days supply) per 180 days

Tamiflu 30mg – #20 capsules (10 days supply) per 180 days

Tamiflu 75mg & 45mg #10 capsules (10 days supply) per 180 days

Tamiflu 12mg/mL Susp. 75mL (10 days or more for some children) per 180 days

¹ CDC website http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/habits.htm?s_cid=swineFlu_outbreak_003

Rest assured, that a call for authorization is required **only** for quantities beyond this normal and accepted course of therapy. So, if you do happen to get the flu, whether it is the seasonal variety or “swine flu,” you do not need to worry that there will not be enough medicine for you.

Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano reported in a news conference two days ago that there are 50 million courses of antiviral therapy available in the strategic stockpile that can be released if needed.² Please visit our website at <http://www.vhpla.com/> and click the green sign, ‘2009 Flu Info’. There is a wealth of accurate and helpful information about swine flu available here from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), as well as the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. Or, you can access this and other information directly at either of these sites at the following Web addresses:

<http://www.pandemicflu.gov/>

http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/antiviral_swine.htm

If you have any questions, please contact Vantage Health Plan at (318) 361-0900 or toll free at (888) 823-1910. For the hearing impaired, please call TTY (318) 361-2131 or toll free TTY (866) 524-5144. Member Services is available Monday through Friday from 8:00 am – 8:00 pm to assist you.

Sincerely,

Member Services Department
Vantage Health Plan, Inc.

² Napolitano: U.S. government releasing antiviral medication to states. CNNhealth.com
<http://cnnwire.blogs.cnn.com/2009/04/29/napolitano>