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**MEMORANDUM**

for ATRIO Health Plan Members

ATRIO Health Plans, your Medicare Advantage Plan, is reminding all of its members that while Swine Flu is receiving a great deal of attention in the news media, there are a number of steps that can help keep you healthy and avoid catching any influenza—including the Swine Flu.

Influenza viruses are spread mainly from person-to-person when someone who has the flu, typically coughs or sneezes. There are a number of preventive measures that can be taken to help reduce the spread of any contagious medical illness.

1. Washing your hands with soap and water for at least 15-20 seconds.
2. When soap and water are not available, use hand sanitizers containing at least 60% alcohol.
3. Cover your nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing, use tissues or cough into your sleeve.
4. Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
5. If not feeling well, do not go to school, work or attend crowded events.
6. Avoiding close contact with people who are already sick.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) reports the Swine Flu is a strain of the influenza virus that is unique because it is a combination of genes from swine, bird, and human influenza viruses. Infected individuals report flu-like symptoms of fever, aches and pains, sore throats, coughing and trouble breathing. Some people have also reported diarrhea and vomiting. This is a new virus combination, highly contagious and can be transmitted from person-to-person.

The Swine flu is a respiratory disease of pigs caused by type A influenza viruses (H1N1) that causes regular outbreaks in pigs. However, the swine flu is rare among humans, although infections can and do happen. Symptoms may not appear for 24-48 hours after contact.

*Avoid the hospital if you are experiencing flu-like symptoms. Contact your local primary care provider first.*

If no other physical concerns are present, physicians generally recommend getting rest, drinking plenty of fluids, and using fever-reducing products such as acetaminophen (Tylenol or Anacin3) or Ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin or Nuprin) which have proven effective for flu symptoms.

For those infected with any influenza, physicians recommend "self-quarantine" to prevent the contagious illness from spreading to others. It is often hard to distinguish the symptoms of a swine flu from any other form of influenza. The one distinction is that the swine flu is not a common cold. Common cold has its symptoms from the neck up -- sore throat, stuffy nose and feeling crummy. However influenza tends to make you feel much more ill. You can have a sore throat but then you also get cough and muscle aches and pains.

If you get sick, antiviral drugs can make your illness milder and make you feel better faster. These medications work best if started soon after getting sick. Please contact your primary care provider for more information.

***Stay healthy. Take precautions. Use common sense.***