

# Five with swine flu in intensive care

Five people with swine flu have been placed in intensive care in Victoria and residents at three nursing homes are being tested for the potentially deadly virus.

A Department of Human Services (DHS) spokesman told The Age he could not say how old the five patients were or whether they had an underlying health condition that may have given them complications when they were infected with the virus.

"What the underlying causes of their illness is, I don't know. They are certainly not well and need to be managed in ICU," he said.

"In one case, the person is in hospital because of trauma, so the H1N1 is unrelated." In a written statement, Victoria's acting chief health officer, Dr Rosemary Lester, said health authorities were working with three nursing homes where a number of residents have reported flu-like symptoms.

"As is the usual practice in such instances, symptomatic residents have been isolated and movement of residents and staff has been restricted," the statement said.

"Action being taken also includes the restrictions of visitors to the facility until the cases have resolved. Nose and throat swabs have been taken from the symptomatic cases for testing at VIDRL (Victorian Infectious Diseases Reference Laboratory)."

The DHS spokesman would not name the homes or where the five intensive care patients were being treated.

Australia's National Pandemic Emergency Committee will meet on Friday. The DHS spokesman said the vast majority of the 1,011 Victorians with swine flu had experienced mild symptoms.

DHS say they expect some people will become seriously ill after they become infected with swine flu.

"I think as we've seen the numbers of cases grow, we would have expected, unfortunately that some people will become seriously ill," Dr Lester said. She said the five people in intensive care were admitted with more serious medical conditions than swine flu.

"My information is that in one case the ICU admission is for an unrelated condition and the finding of the swine flu is incidental," Dr Lester told ABC Radio on Thursday.

"I do believe the others are there because of complication underlying medical conditions." Those conditions include asthma and diabetes, she said.

It was still unclear as to why the most number of swine flu cases have been in Victoria. She said a combination of factors including early exposure from a traveller from the US, a

comprehensive testing regime, and the mild nature of the virus could have all contributed to the quick spread.