Overview

1. The presence of Pandemic Illness (including Swine Flu, SARS, etc. and hereafter referred to as PI) should be considered for all patients presenting with fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills fatigue, or unknown illness. Vomiting and diarrhea have also been reported with some PI's.
2. If a patient presents with any of the above symptoms, investigate the presence of further risk factors for PI:
    a. Recent travel to an area with documented cases of PI.
    b. Close contact with persons with confirmed cases of, or exhibiting significant symptoms of possible PI.
    c. Recent exposure to non-human reservoirs of PI, such as livestock.

Information Needed

1. History: sudden or gradual onset, cough, fever, sore throat, hoarseness, past medical history, medications.
2. Physical findings: LOC, air movement, lung sounds, respiratory rate and effort, retractions, use of accessory muscles, stridor, cough, wheezing, crackles, leaning forward or drooling, skin color and temperature.

Responder Safety:

1. Request more information from dispatchers when sent to respiratory, sick person and fever related calls if limited initial information is provided upon dispatch.
2. Always use standard personal protective equipment precautions (PPE).
3. Initial interrogation of the patient from at least 2 meters (6.5 feet) away to determine if additional PPE are necessary.
4. Recommended PPE for taking care of ill/potentially infected patients includes:
    a. Gloves.
    b. Goggles or face shields.
    c. N95 or better respiratory protection.
    d. Disposable gowns.

5. PPE should be donned and doffed according to standard guidelines to prevent cross contamination, including eye and gown protection when splash or airborne contamination is possible.
6. Place a surgical or other droplet-preventing mask on all patients with suspected symptoms. **Do not apply an N95 with exhalation valve to the patient**. Use non-rebreather masks when oxygen is required.
7. Droplet producing procedures should be avoided whenever possible including nebulizers, bag-valve-mask, suctioning or intubation.
8. Alert receiving hospital personnel of the possibility of an infectious patient as soon as possible and hold suspected infectious patients in the ambulance until their destination in the hospital is known, rather than immediately moving them into the emergency room.
9. Perform cleaning and disinfecting of the ambulance, stretcher and all equipment in accordance with the appropriate standard operating procedure.
10. Disposable equipment used on the patient should be discarded as infectious waste.

Notes

1. Your first responsibility in a PI case is to recognize the possibility and act to restrict the spread of the illness.
2. Except in severe cases, pre-hospital treatment of the patient will be supportive. Weigh the benefit of a therapy to the patient (such as IV's) against the potential danger of contamination.