

Swine Influenza

Public Information Sheet

What is swine flu?

Swine Influenza (swine flu) is a respiratory illness in pigs caused by influenza virus type A. People do not normally get swine flu, but they can get infected. Swine flu viruses have been reported to spread from person-to-person, but in the past, this transmission was limited and not sustained beyond three people.

What are the signs and symptoms of swine flu in people?

The symptoms of swine flu in people are similar to the symptoms of regular human flu and include fever (greater than 100F), cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people have reported diarrhea and vomiting associated with swine flu. In the past, severe illness (pneumonia and respiratory failure) and deaths have been reported with swine flu infection in people. Like seasonal flu, swine flu may cause a worsening of underlying chronic medical conditions.

How does swine flu spread?

Spread of this swine influenza A (H1N1) virus is thought to be happening in the same way that seasonal flu spreads. Flu viruses are spread mainly from person to person through coughing or sneezing of people with influenza. Sometimes people may become infected by touching something with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth or nose.

What surfaces are most likely to be sources of contamination?

Germs can be spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose, or mouth. Droplets from a cough or sneeze of an infected person move through the air. Germs can be spread when a person touches respiratory droplets from another person on a surface like a desk and then touches their own eyes, mouth or nose before washing their hands.

Frequent handwashing will help you reduce the chance of getting contamination from these common surfaces.

How can someone with the flu infect someone else?

Infected people may be able to infect others beginning 1 day before symptoms develop and up to 7 or more days after becoming sick. That means that you may be able to pass on the flu to someone else before you know you are sick, as well as while you are sick.

People with swine influenza virus infection should be considered potentially contagious as long as they have symptoms and possible for up to 7 days following onset of disease. Children, especially younger children, might potentially be contagious for longer periods.

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What should I do to keep from getting the flu?

Try to stay in good general health. Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids, and eat nutritious food.

There is no vaccine available right now to protect against swine flu.

Take these everyday steps to protect your health:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it. Then, clean your hands, and do so every time you cough or sneeze.
- Try not touch surfaces that may be contaminated with the flu virus. Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- If you are sick, limit your contact with other people as much as possible. Do not go to work or school if ill. It may prevent those around you from getting sick.

Can I get swine influenza from eating or preparing pork?

No. Swine influenza viruses are not spread by food. You cannot get swine influenza from eating pork or pork products. Eating properly handled and cooked pork products is safe.

What should I do if I get sick?

If you live or have visited areas where human swine flu have been identified and you have become ill with influenza-like symptoms, including fever, body aches, runny nose, sore throat, nausea, or vomiting or diarrhea, immediately contact your healthcare provider and inform them of your exposure or travel. Please alert your healthcare provider prior to your visit so they can take proper precautions.

If you are sick, you should stay home and avoid contact with other people as much as possible to keep from spreading your illness to others. Follow the everyday steps (see above) to protect your health.

If you become ill and experience any of the following warning signs, seek emergency medical care.

In children emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention include:

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish skin color

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- Not drinking enough fluids
- Not waking up or not interacting
- Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough
- Fever with a rash

In adults, emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention include:

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting

Are there medicines to treat swine flu?

Yes. CDC recommends the use of oseltamivir or zanamivir for the treatment and/or prevention of infection with these swine influenza viruses. Antiviral drugs are prescription medicines (pills, liquid or an inhaler) that fight against the flu by keeping flu viruses from reproducing in your body. If you get sick, antiviral drugs can make your illness milder and make you feel better faster. They may also prevent serious flu complications. For treatment, antiviral drugs work best if started soon after getting sick (within 2 days of symptoms).

Where can I get more information about swine flu?

West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources at
<http://www.wvdep.org/Home/HotTopicSwineInfluenza/tabid/1856/Default.aspx>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at <http://www.cdc.gov/>

Travel Health Precaution at <http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/contentSwineFluTravel.aspx>