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Swine Influenza

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What is swine flu?

Swine flu is a respiratory disease of pigs caused by type A influenza viruses. Outbreaks of swine flu happen regularly in pigs. People do not normally get swine flu, but human infections can, and do happen. Most commonly, human cases of swine flu happen in people who are around pigs but it is possible for swine flu viruses to spread from person to person also.

Is this swine flu contagious?

CDC has determined that this virus is contagious and is spreading from human to human. However, at this time, it is not known how easily the virus spreads between people.

What are the symptoms of swine flu?

The symptoms of swine flu in people are similar to the symptoms of regular human flu and include:

- Fever
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Body aches
- Headache
- Chills
- Fatigue (tiredness)
- 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 other chronic medical conditions to become worse.

How serious is swine flu infection?

Like seasonal flu, swine flu in humans can vary in severity from mild to severe.

How do you catch swine flu?

Spread of swine flu can occur in two ways:

- Through contact with infected pigs or environments contaminated with swine flu viruses.
- Through contact with a person with swine flu. Human-to-human spread of swine flu has been documented also and is thought to occur in the same way as seasonal

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flu. Influenza is thought to spread mainly person-to-person through coughing or sneezing of infected people.

Are there medications to treat swine flu?

Yes. CDC recommends the use of tamiflu or relenza for the treatment and/or prevention of infection with these swine influenza viruses. Antiviral drugs are prescription medicines (pills, liquid, or inhalers) 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 symptom onset).

What can I do to prevent myself from getting sick?

There is no vaccine available right now to protect against swine flu. There are everyday actions that can help prevent the spread of germs that can cause respiratory illnesses like influenza. Things you can do to prevent the spread of respiratory illnesses include:

- Covering your nose and mouth with a tissue or your shirt sleeve when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers are also effective. Make sure that it is at least 60% alcohol.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- If you get sick with influenza, CDC recommends that you stay home from work or school and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.

If I had a flu shot for this past flu season, will it protect me?

No, the swine flu is a new virus and was not included in the 2008-2009 seasonal flu vaccine. However, the Department does recommend that persons receive the flu shot annually to protect against seasonal influenza.

What should I do if I get sick?

If you become ill with influenza-like symptoms, including fever, body aches, runny nose, sore throat, nausea, or vomiting, or diarrhea, contact your health care provider, especially if you are worried about your symptoms. Your health care provider will determine whether influenza testing or treatment is needed. 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.

How do I care for someone in my home that is sick with Swine flu?

- Check with your health care provider about any special care they might need if they are pregnant or have a health condition such as diabetes, heart disease, asthma, or emphysema
- Check with your health care provider about whether they should take antiviral medications
- Ensure they stay home until the illness and fever are gone
- Ensure they get plenty of rest
- Ensure that they drink clear fluids (such as water, broth, sports drinks, electrolyte beverages for infants) to keep from being dehydrated
- Remind the sick person to cover coughs and sneezes. Remind everyone in the home to clean hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub often and especially after using tissues and after coughing or sneezing into hands.
- Avoid close contact with others – do not go to work or school while ill
- Be watchful for emergency warning signs (see below) that might indicate you need to seek medical attention

Placement of the sick person

- Keep the sick person in a room separate from the common areas of the house. (For example, a spare bedroom with its own bathroom, if that's possible.) Keep the sickroom door closed.
- Unless necessary for medical care, persons with the flu should not leave the home when they have a fever or during the time that they are most likely to spread their infection to others (7 days after onset of symptoms in adults, and 10 days after onset of symptoms in children).
- If persons with the flu need to leave the home (for example, for medical care), they should cover their nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing and wear a loose-fitting (surgical) mask if available.
- Have the sick person wear a surgical mask if they need to be in a common area of the house near other persons.
- If possible, sick persons should use a separate bathroom. This bathroom should be cleaned daily with household disinfectant.

Protect other persons in the home

- The sick person should not have visitors other than caregivers. A phone call is safer than a visit.
- If possible, have only one adult in the home take care of the sick person.
- Avoid having pregnant women care for the sick person. (Pregnant women are at increased risk of influenza-related complications and immunity can be suppressed during pregnancy).

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- All persons in the household should clean their hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub frequently, including after every contact with the sick person or the person's room or bathroom.
- Use paper towels for drying hands after hand washing or dedicate cloth towels to each person in the household. For example, have different colored towels for each person.
- If possible, consideration should be given to maintaining good ventilation in shared household areas (e.g., keeping windows open in restrooms, kitchen, bathroom, etc.).
- Antivirals can be used to prevent the flu, so check with your healthcare provider to see if some persons in the home should use antiviral medications.

If you are the caregiver

- Avoid being face-to-face with the sick person.
- When holding small children who are sick, place their chin on your shoulder so that they will not cough in your face.
- Clean your hands with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand rub after you touch the sick person or handle used tissues, or laundry.
- Caregivers might catch flu from the person they are caring for and then the caregiver might be able to spread the flu to others before the caregiver shows symptoms. Therefore, the caregiver should wear a mask when they leave their home to keep from spreading flu to others in case they are in the early stages of infection.
- Talk to your health care provider about taking antiviral medication to prevent the caregiver from getting the flu.
- Monitor yourself and household members for flu symptoms and contact your health care provider if symptoms occur.

What are some signs that emergency medical attention is needed?

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

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish skin color
- 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

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- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting

Can I get swine flu from eating or preparing pork?

No. Swine flu viruses are not spread by food.

I traveled to an affected area should I be concerned?

People traveling from the United States to affected areas should be aware of the risk of illness with swine flu and take precautions.

- At this time, there are no CDC recommendations for U.S. travelers to restrict travel plans to Texas, California, New York City, Ohio, Kansas or Mexico.
- However, today CDC issued outbreak notices to travelers to Mexico and the United States. These notices are available on the CDC Swine Flu web page at <http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/investigation.htm>
- If you are traveling to Mexico, you should be sure you get a seasonal flu vaccination. It is not expected to protect against swine flu, but it will protect you against seasonal flu. Flu season runs through May in the northern hemisphere, and is just beginning in tropical and southern hemisphere

Will a mask protect me from Swine flu?

Masks have been used as a preventive measure in the past, but it is unclear if a mask will protect you from Swine flu. At this time the best prevention is: covering your nose and mouth when you sneeze, wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze, alcohol-based hand sanitizers are also effective, make sure that it is at least 60% alcohol, avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Most importantly **STAY HOME IF YOU ARE SICK.**

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION RESOURCES

Where can I learn more?

The New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services hotline number is 1-866-321-9571.

The CDC website will be providing daily updates regarding the status of the swine flu investigation in the US. They also have information posted such as questions and answers regarding swine flu. The web address is www.cdc.gov/swineflu.

Information provided from Centers of Disease Control
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