

PUBLIC HEALTH FACT SHEET

Swine Influenza (Swine Flu)

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What is swine flu?

Swine influenza (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.

Are there human infections with swine flu in the U.S.?

In late March and early April 2009, cases of human infection with swine influenza A (H1N1) viruses were first reported in Southern California and near San Antonio, Texas. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and local and state health agencies are working together to investigate the situation.

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 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, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people have reported vomiting and diarrhea 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 is the flu spread?

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 flu. Influenza is thought to spread mainly person-to-person through coughs and sneezes of infected people.

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.

When and for how long is a person able to spread the flu?

Adults may be able to spread the disease to others beginning one day **before** getting symptoms and up to seven days **after** getting sick. That means that you can give someone the flu before you know you're sick as well as when you are sick. Children may be contagious for longer than a week.

What can I do to protect myself against the flu?

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 cause respiratory illnesses like influenza. Take these everyday steps to protect your health:

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue 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 cleaners are also effective if soap and water are not available.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- If you get sick with influenza, stay home from work or school and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them.

Are there medications 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 48 hours of symptoms starting). If you think you have the flu, talk to your healthcare provider about whether you should take an anti-viral.

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, vomiting or diarrhea, you may want to contact your healthcare provider. Your healthcare provider will determine whether influenza testing and 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.

If you or a loved one is having difficulty breathing, shortness of breath, pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen, sudden dizziness, confusion or severe and persistent vomiting, seek emergency medical care. For children, warning signs include fast or troubled breathing, bluish skin color, extreme irritability, not waking up or not interacting, fever with rash, and flu-like symptoms that improve but then return with fever and a worse cough.

Where can I get more information?

- Your doctor, nurse or clinic
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website at: <http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/>
- The Burlington County Department of Health at (609)265-5548
- The New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services (NJDHSS) at (609) 588-7465 or on the NJDHSS Website at <http://www.state.nj.us/health>