



New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services
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Swine Influenza Frequently Asked Questions

What is swine flu?

Swine influenza (or swine flu) is a respiratory disease of pigs that is caused by a type A influenza virus. Outbreaks of swine flu happen regularly in pigs. It is uncommon, however, for these viruses to jump to humans and cause large outbreaks.

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

In late March and early April 2009, cases of human infection with swine influenza A (H1N1) virus were first reported in Southern California and near San Antonio, Texas. Other U.S. states have reported cases of swine flu infection in humans and cases have been reported international also. An updated count of confirmed cases in the U.S. is available at www.cdc.gov/swineflu/investigation.htm. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and state and local health agencies are working together to investigate and monitor this situation.

Is swine flu very contagious?

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

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

The symptoms of swine flu in people are similar to those of regular seasonal flu and include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills, and fatigue. Some people have reported diarrhea and vomiting associated with the swine flu. As with seasonal flu, swine flu may cause a worsening of underlying chronic medical conditions.

How does someone get swine flu?

The spread of swine flu is thought to be happening in the same way that seasonal flu spreads, from person to person through coughing or sneezing by people with influenza. People may also become infected by touching something with flu virus on it and then touching their mouth or nose.

When 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 days or more after becoming sick. That means you may be able to pass the flu on to someone else before you know you are sick, as well as while you are sick.

What can people do to keep from getting the flu?

The most important thing people should do to prevent becoming ill is what they should already be doing: washing their hands, frequently. It is also important to avoid close contact with people who are ill, to get plenty of sleep, to eat a healthy diet and to exercise regularly. Avoiding touching surface that may be contaminated with the flu virus is important also.

Is there medicine to treat swine flu?

Yes. The CDC recommends the use of oseltamivir or zanamivir for treatment of infection with these swine influenza viruses. Antiviral drugs are prescription medications (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 will not make the flu go away, but they will 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).

Is it safe to eat pork and pork products?

Yes. Swine influenza is not spread by food. You cannot get swine influenza from eating pork or pork products. As always, eating properly handled and cooked pork products is safe.

What precautions should people take to protect themselves from becoming sick?

There is no vaccine right now to protect against swine flu because it is a new virus. There are everyday actions people can take to help prevent the spread of germs that cause respiratory illness like influenza including:

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, or use your elbow, then throw the tissue in the trash after use
- Wash your hands often with soap and water (15-20 seconds with soap and warm water), especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- If you get sick with influenza, you should stay home from work or school and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them.

What should people do if they get sick?

If you live in an area where swine flu cases have been identified or if you have traveled to a location where swine flu has been identified and you become ill with influenza-like symptoms, including fever, body aches, runny nose, sore throat, nausea, or vomiting and diarrhea, you may want to contact your healthcare provider, particularly if you are worried about your symptoms. Your healthcare provider can determine whether influenza testing or treatment is needed.

What are the emergency warning signs to look for for severe illness?

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, the emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention include:

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

How does someone know if they have swine influenza?

Many people will never know because they won't become sick enough to seek medical attention, just as with seasonal flu. If you visit your healthcare provider, they make do a preliminary test which may be able to tell whether what you have is a flu strain or not. After that, samples could come to the NH Public Health Labs for further testing to determine if the strain of flu virus is swine flu or not.

For more information and questions about swine influenza, call the New Hampshire swine flu public inquiry line at 1-888-330-6764 which is open every day between 8:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m. You can also visit the NH Department of Health and Human Services website at www.dhhs.nh.gov, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at www.cdc.gov/swineflu/, or the World Health Organization (WHO) website at www.who.int/csr/don/en/.