

Corpus Christi-Nueces County Public Health District



Swine Influenza and You

What is swine flu? Swine Influenza (swine flu) is a respiratory disease of pigs caused by type A influenza viruses that causes regular outbreaks in pigs. People do not normally get swine flu, but human infections can and do happen.

What are the signs and symptoms of swine flu in people? The symptoms of swine flu in people are similar to the seasonal flu and include fever, 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 additional complications in people with chronic medical conditions.

How does swine flu spread? Flu viruses are spread mainly from person to person through coughing or sneezing of people with influenza. Germs can also be spread when a person touches something that has germs on it (i.e. a desk, phone, door knob) 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 long can an infected person spread swine flu to others? People infected with swine flu can infect others before symptoms develop and up to 7 or more days after becoming sick. That means that you can pass on the flu to someone before you know you are sick, as well as while you are sick. Children, especially younger children, might potentially be contagious for longer periods.

What can I do to protect myself from getting sick? There is no vaccine available right now to protect against swine flu. Still, there are everyday actions you can take that can help prevent the spread of germs that cause respiratory illnesses like influenza. Take these everyday steps to protect your health:

- **Wash your hands often with soap and water** Wash your hands with soap and water for 15 to 20 seconds. (If you are not sure how long this is, try singing the song “Happy Birthday” twice.) When soap and water are not available, alcohol-based disposable hand wipes or gel sanitizers may be used. You can find them in most supermarkets and drugstores. If using gel, rub your hands until the gel is dry.
- **Avoid** touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way. Also avoid close contact with sick people.
- **Practice other good health habits**, such as:
 - get plenty of sleep
 - be physically active
 - manage your stress
 - drink plenty of fluids and
 - eat nutritious foods

What should I do if I get sick?

If you live in areas where there are human swine influenza cases and become ill with influenza-like symptoms, such as fever, body aches, runny nose, sore throat, nausea, or vomiting or diarrhea, contact their health care provider, particularly if you are worried about your symptoms. Your health care provider will determine whether influenza testing or treatment is needed.

If you are sick, stay home and avoid contact with other people as much as possible to keep from spreading your illness. As with any illness, if you experience any of the following, seek emergency medical care immediately.

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
- 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).

What can I do to keep from spreading the virus to others?

- **Avoid** contact with other people as much as possible. Do not go to work or school .
- **Cough** or sneeze into your shoulder or cover your mouth and nose with a tissue. Throw the tissue away after use.
- **Wash** your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.

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.