

Preventing the Flu: Good Health Habits Can Help Stop Germs

Fact Sheet

The single best way to prevent seasonal flu is to get vaccinated each year, but good health habits like covering your cough and washing your hands often can help stop the spread of germs and prevent respiratory illnesses like the flu. There also are flu antiviral drugs that can be used to treat and prevent the flu.

Avoid close contact.

Avoid close contact with people who are sick. When you are sick, keep your distance from others to protect them from getting sick too.

Stay home when you are sick.

If possible, stay home from work, school, and errands when you are sick. You will help prevent others from catching your illness.

Cover your mouth and nose.

Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. It may prevent those around you from getting sick.

Clean your hands.

Washing your hands often will help protect you from germs.

Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.

Germs are often spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose, or mouth.

Practice other good health habits.

Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids, and eat nutritious food.

What You Can Do to Stay Healthy

Stay informed. This CDC website <http://www.cdc.gov> will be updated regularly as information becomes available.

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

Take everyday actions to stay healthy.

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 hands cleaners are also effective.

Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread that way.
Stay home if you get sick. CDC recommends that you stay home from work or school and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them.

Follow public health advice regarding school closures, avoiding crowds and other social distancing measures.

Develop a family emergency plan as a precaution. This should include storing a supply of food, medicines, facemasks, alcohol-based hand rubs and other essential supplies.

Call 1-800-CDC-INFO for more information.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

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. 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.

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 Guadalupe County, Texas. Other U.S. states have reported cases of swine flu infection in humans and cases have been reported internationally as well. An updated case count of confirmed swine flu infections in the United States is kept at <http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/investigation.htm> CDC and local and state health agencies are working together to investigate this situation.

Is this swine flu virus contagious? CDC has determined that this swine influenza A (H1N1) 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 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.

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.

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.

What should I do to keep from getting the flu? First and most important: wash your hands. 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. Try not touch surfaces that may be contaminated with the flu virus. Avoid close contact with people who are sick.