

Swine Flu

FACT SHEET

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FS1043

What is swine flu?

Swine influenza (swine flu) is a respiratory disease of pigs caused by type A influenza viruses. People do not normally get swine flu, but human infections can and do happen. In late March and early April, cases of human infection with H1N1 swine flu were reported in several countries and US states.

How is swine flu spread?

Swine flu is spread like seasonal flu, when a person coughs or sneezes, sending contaminated respiratory droplets into the air where another person may inhale them. Sometimes people may become infected by touching a contaminated surface or object and then touching their own eyes, nose or mouth.

What are the symptoms of swine flu?

The symptoms of swine flu are similar to the symptoms of seasonal flu and may include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills, runny or stuffy nose and fatigue. Some people have reported nausea, vomiting and diarrhea. 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 underlying chronic medical conditions to worsen.

Who is at risk for getting swine flu?

Cases of swine flu have most commonly occurred in people who have direct contact with infected swine. People can also get sick from other infected people. A person who has swine flu may be able to infect other people one day before his/her symptoms develop to seven days after showing symptoms.

What is the best way to protect myself against swine flu?

At this time the public is encouraged to protect themselves by following common sense, proven disease prevention methods, including—

- Frequent hand washing with soap and water,
- Keeping a distance of at least six feet from people who are sick, and
- Avoid touching your own eyes, mouth or nose.

Individuals who are sick are encouraged to protect the community by —

- Staying home while ill,
- Covering their cough or sneeze, and
- Avoid sharing personal items such as utensils, drinks or a toothbrush with family members.

What should I do if I develop symptoms of swine flu?

People who develop flu-like symptoms AND have a history of recent travel to a location where cases of swine flu have been confirmed, or have had close personal contact with someone who has a confirmed case of swine flu, should contact their health care provider.

How is swine flu treated?

Two antiviral medications are currently proving to be effective against the strain of swine flu currently circulating in the United States. However, antiviral medication may not be necessary for most people to recover from flu viruses. A decision can best be made by each individual's health care provider.