

Swine Flu Prevention and Care

Swine influenza (flu) has become a major cause for concern in both the United States and internationally due to the rapid spread of human-to-human transmission. The World Health Organization declared a public health emergency based on the likelihood that the virus (H1N1) is able to cause “community-level” outbreaks. Now, it is more important than ever to use the proper precautionary tools to keep ourselves and our families safe. The following tips are provided to help prevent a possible contraction of the swine flu virus.



Swine Flu and You

What can I do to protect myself from getting sick?

There is no vaccine currently available to protect against swine flu. There are everyday actions, however, that can help prevent the spread of germs that cause respiratory illnesses like influenza. Take these everyday steps to protect your health:

- Try to stay in good general health. Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids and eat nutritious foods.
- 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 (for at least 25-20 seconds), especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based sanitizers are also effective. If using gel, rub your hands until the gel is dry. The gel doesn't need water to work; the alcohol in it kills the germs on your hands.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs can be spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose or mouth. Some viruses and bacteria can live two hours or longer on surfaces like cafeteria tables, doorknobs and desks.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people. Don't travel to places where outbreaks have been confirmed unless absolutely necessary.
- Swine influenza viruses are not spread by food. You cannot contract swine influenza from eating pork or pork products. Eating properly handled and cooked pork products is safe.

What if I get sick?

- If you become ill with influenza-like symptoms, including fever, body aches, runny nose, sore throat, nausea, or vomiting or diarrhea, you should contact your health care provider, particularly if you are worried about your symptoms. Your health care provider will determine whether influenza testing and/or treatment with antiviral drugs is/are needed.
- If you get sick, antiviral drugs can make your illness milder and make you feel better faster. Antiviral drugs are prescription medicines (pills, liquid or an inhaler) that fight against the flu by keeping flu viruses from reproducing in your body. They may also prevent serious flu complications and are most effective for treatment when started within 48 hours of when symptoms appear. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommends the use of oseltamivir (Tamiflu®) or zanamivir (Relenza®) for the treatment and/or prevention of infection with these swine influenza viruses.
- People with swine influenza virus infection should be considered potentially contagious as long as they are symptomatic and for up to seven days following illness onset. Children, especially younger children, might potentially be contagious for longer periods of time.
- If you get sick with influenza, the CDC recommends that you stay home from work or school and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them.

When should I seek emergency attention?

If you become ill and experience any of the following warning signs, seek emergency medical care.

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 a worsening cough
- Fever, accompanied by 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

Empower yourself to make a difference in combating the swine flu by informing friends, family, neighbors and co-workers about the best precautionary tools to prevent “community-level” outbreaks of this virus.

If you have any questions relating to the virus, please contact your physician or local public health department.

To learn more about the swine flu, please visit: <http://www.cdc.gov/>