

What is swine flu?

Swine Influenza (swine flu) is a respiratory disease of pigs infected with type A influenza viruses. People do not normally get swine flu, but human infections can and do happen.

Are any humans infected with swine flu in the U.S. currently?

Yes. 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 San Antonio, Texas. 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 and to monitor the number of reported cases.

What kinds of things can I do to prepare?

The CDC provides the following recommendations to help you gather the information and resources you may need in case of pandemic flu.

- Have extra supplies on hand. Store a two week supply of water and food.
- Periodically check your regular prescription drugs to ensure a continuous supply in your home.
- Have any nonprescription drugs and other health supplies on hand, including pain relievers, stomach remedies, cough and cold medicines, fluids with electrolytes and vitamins.
- Talk with family members and loved ones about how they would be cared for if they got sick, or what will be needed to care for them in your home.
- Volunteer with local groups to prepare and assist with emergency response.
- Get involved in your community as it works to prepare for an influenza pandemic.

How does swine flu spread?

The CDC has determined that this swine influenza A (H1N1) virus is contagious and is spreading from human to human. It is not known how easily the virus spreads between people, but it is thought to spread in the same way seasonal flu spreads—mainly from person to person through people with influenza coughing or sneezing. Sometimes people may become infected by touching something with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth or nose.

What surfaces are most likely to be sources of contamination?

Germs can be spread when a person touches an object contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose or mouth. Droplets from an infected person's cough or sneeze move through the air. Germs can be spread when people touch respiratory droplets from infected people on a surface like a desk and then touch their own eyes, mouth or nose before washing their hands. Some viruses and bacteria can live 2 hours or longer on different surfaces.

What is the best technique for washing my hands to avoid getting the flu?

Frequent hand washing will help protect you from germs. We recommend that you wash your hands with soap and warm water for 15 to 20 seconds. 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.

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.

What is the best way to keep from spreading the virus through coughing or sneezing?

If you are sick, limit your contact with other people as much as possible. Do not go to work or school if ill. Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. Put your used tissue in the waste basket. Cover your cough or sneeze if you do not have a tissue. Then, clean your hands, and do so every time you cough or sneeze.

What should I do to keep from getting the flu?

Like seasonal flu, swine flu in humans can vary from mild to severe. Between 2005 and early 2009, 12 human cases of swine flu were detected in the U.S. with no deaths occurring. However, swine flu infection can be serious. There is no vaccine available currently to protect against swine flu. But you can help prevent the spread of germs that cause respiratory illnesses like influenza. Take these everyday steps to protect your health:

- 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 hand cleaners are also effective.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- If you get influenza, the CDC recommends that you stay home from work or school and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them.

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.

What should I do if I get sick?

If you live in areas where swine influenza cases have been identified and you become ill with influenza-like symptoms, including fever, body aches, runny nose, sore throat, nausea, or vomiting or diarrhea, you may want to contact your health care provider. Your health care provider will determine whether influenza testing or treatment is needed. Stay home and avoid contact with other people as much as possible to keep from spreading your illness to others. If you 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
- Fever with a rash
- Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough

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

How long will this last?

We don't know. Experts can't pinpoint a specific timeframe or level of severity at this time.

Where can I go to get regular updates?

Several Web sites containing up-to-date, reliable information are available. Those sites include www.pandemicflu.gov, www.who.int or www.baptistonline.org.