

Guidelines For Treating Possible Swine Flu

The three primary symptoms of swine flu—fever, sore throat, a cough—are identical to those of other respiratory illnesses. The only way to know for sure whether someone has swine flu at this time is through a laboratory test administered through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention or, in some cases, state health departments.

The CDC lists three types of possible swine flu cases:

- A confirmed case is a person whose acute febrile respiratory illness has been confirmed as swine influenza A (H1N1) by a laboratory test
- A probable case is a person with an acute febrile respiratory illness who is positive for influenza A, but negative for H1 and H3 by influenza RT-PCR
- A suspected case is a person with acute febrile respiratory illness with onset within seven days of close contact with a person who is a confirmed case of swine influenza A (H1N1) virus infection; or within seven days of travel to a community either within the United States or internationally where there are one or more confirmed swine influenza A (H1N1) cases; or resides in a community where there are one or more confirmed swine influenza cases

What To Do

The CDC and practitioners are offering recommendations for what to do when patients present with symptoms of an upper respiratory illness—coughing, fever, sore throat, body aches.

If you have a suspected, probable, or confirmed case of swine flu —

- Have the patient sit in a single-patient room with the doors closed. • Ask the person to wear a mask when outside the patient room, and to wash hands frequently.
- Healthcare workers caring for the patient or taking samples should wear disposable non-sterile gloves, gowns, and eye protection such as goggles, and N95 respirators.
- Take a swab or wash for testing, if this has not been done;
- Ask questions about whom the patient has been in contact with in the last seven days. This information should be provided to local health departments for investigations of other possible swine flu cases.
- Check CDC guidelines for offering antiviral medications. <http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/recommendations.htm> The virus is susceptible to Tamiflu (oseltamivir) and Relenza (zanamivir). Current guidelines recommend antivirals for known, probable and suspected cases of swine flu.
- Urge the patient and family members to stay calm. Almost all cases of swine flu in the United States have resolved themselves, even without antiviral treatment.

The CDC currently recommends that healthcare workers or public health workers who were not using appropriate protective equipment (gloves, gowns, masks, eye-protection) while in close contact with a suspected or confirmed case of swine flu should take antiviral medications as prophylactics.

Healthcare workers and first-responders who are at high-risk for complications of influenza, such as those with certain chronic conditions, those who are 65 or older, and pregnant women) in facilities or areas with confirmed swine flu, or those caring for any patients with febrile respiratory disease, should consider taking antiviral medications, according to CDC guidelines.