

What is Swine Flu?

Swine influenza A virus infection (swine flu) is an acute respiratory disease of pigs caused by one of several type A swine influenza virus- H1N1.

Human Infection

Although swine influenza viruses are normally species specific and only infect pigs, they do sometimes cross the barrier to cause disease in humans. Human-to-human transmission of swine flu can also occur.

How Flu Spreads

The main way that influenza viruses are thought to spread is from person to person in respiratory droplets of coughs and sneezes. This can happen when droplets from a cough or sneeze of an infected person are propelled through the air and deposited on the mouth or nose of people nearby.

Influenza viruses may also be spread when a person touches respiratory droplets on another person or an object and then touches their own mouth or nose (or someone else's mouth or nose) before washing their hands.

Diagnosis

To diagnose swine influenza A infection, a respiratory specimen would generally need to be collected within the first 4 to 5 days of illness (when an infected person is most likely to be shedding virus). The infectious period for a confirmed case of swine flu (H1N1) virus is defined as 1 day prior to the illness onset to 7 days after onset.

Symptoms

Like seasonal influenza, human swine flu can cause a wide range of symptoms, including fever, cough, body aches, headache, lack of appetite, chills and fatigue. Some people have reported runny nose, sore throat, nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea associated with swine flu. Like seasonal flu, swine flu in humans can vary in severity from mild to severe.

Severe disease with pneumonia, respiratory failure and even death is possible with swine flu infection. Certain groups might be more likely to develop a severe illness from swine flu infection, such as persons with chronic medical conditions. Sometimes bacterial infections may occur at the same time as or after infection with influenza viruses and lead to pneumonias, ear infections, or sinus infections.

Vaccination

There are no vaccines to protect humans from swine flu that contain the current swine influenza virus causing illness in humans. Vaccines are prepared to protect against current known viruses and viruses change very quickly. The seasonal influenza vaccine may provide a partial protection but at this time it is unclear.

Staying Protected

To protect yourself, practice general preventive measures for influenza and encourage others to practice "cover your cough" etiquette.

- Avoid close contact with people who appear unwell and who have fever and cough
- Wash your hands with soap and water frequently and thoroughly.
- Practice good health habits including adequate sleep, eating nutritious food and keeping physically active.

Flu Care at Home

People with swine flu who are cared for at home should:

- check with their health care provider about any special care they might need
- check with their health care provider about whether they should take antiviral medications
- stay home for 7 days after the start of illness and fever is gone
- get plenty of rest
- drink clear fluids (such as water, broth, sports drinks, electrolyte beverages for infants) to keep from being dehydrated
- cover coughs and sneezes. Clean hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub often and especially after using tissues and after coughing or sneezing into hands.
- avoid close contact with others – do not go to work or school while ill
- be watchful for emergency warning signs (see below) that might indicate you need to seek medical attention
 - ◇ difficulty breathing or chest pain
 - ◇ purple or blue discoloration of the lips
 - ◇ vomiting and unable to keep fluids down
 - ◇ signs of dehydration– dizzy when standing, unable to urinate.
 - ◇ has seizures
 - ◇ less responsive than normal or becomes confused

Eating Pork Products

Swine influenza virus is not transmitted in food. You can not get swine flu from eating pork. Cooking pork to an internal temperature of 160° kills the virus.

Protect Others

- The sick person should not have visitors other than caregivers. A phone call is safer than a visit.
- If possible, have only one adult in the home take care of the sick person.
- Avoid having pregnant women care for the sick person.
- All persons in the household should clean their hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub frequently, including after every contact with the sick person or the person's room or bathroom.
- Use paper towels for drying hands after hand washing or dedicate cloth towels to each person in the household. For example, have different colored towels for each person.
- If possible, consideration should be given to maintaining good ventilation in shared household areas (e.g., keeping windows open in restrooms, kitchen, bathroom, etc.).

The Caregiver

If you are the caregiver

- Avoid being face-to-face with the sick person.
- When holding small children who are sick, place their chin on your shoulder so that they will not cough in your face.
- Clean your hands with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand rub after you touch the sick person or handle used tissues, or laundry.
- **Monitor yourself and household members for flu symptoms and contact a health care provider if symptoms occur.**

At Home Management

When providing care to a household member who is sick with influenza, the most important ways to protect yourself and others who are not sick are to:

- keep the sick person away from other people as much as possible
- remind the sick person to cover their coughs, and clean their hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub often, especially after coughing and/or sneezing.
- have everyone in the household clean their hands often, using soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub
- ask your healthcare provide if household contacts of the sick person, should take antiviral medications
- Keep the sick person in a room separate from the common areas of the house. (For example, a spare bedroom with its own bathroom, if that's possible.) Keep the sickroom door closed.
- Unless necessary for medical care, persons with the flu should not leave the home when they have a fever or during the time that they are most likely to spread their infection to others (7 days after onset of symptoms in adults, and 10 days after onset of symptoms in children).
- If persons with the flu need to leave the home (for example, for medical care), they should cover their nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing and wear a loose-fitting (surgical) mask if available.
- Have the sick person wear a surgical mask if they need to be in a common area of the house near other persons.
- If possible, sick persons should use a separate bathroom. This bathroom should be cleaned daily with household disinfectant .



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