



A Tradition of Stewardship
A Commitment to Service

Fact Sheet: Swine Flu in People

Swine Flu Illness in People (April 2009)

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has reported cases of swine flu (H1N1) virus infection in people in the United States. The CDC has determined that this virus is contagious and is spreading from human to human. At this time, they have not determined how easily the virus spreads between people. The cases identified so far have all been mild disease with full recovery except for one person who had an underlying illness but has also fully recovered.

Even though there is no vaccine available at this time, you can take steps to prevent spreading this or other respiratory viruses to others. You can help prevent illness by following these recommendations:

- Wash your hands frequently with soap and warm water for at least 30 seconds
- Cover your coughs and sneezes in your sleeve or with a tissue
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth
- Keep away from people who are coughing and sneezing
- Stay home if you are sick

People who develop an illness with fever and respiratory symptoms should contact their health care provider. These symptoms may also include: cough and runny nose, and possibly other symptoms, such as body aches, nausea, or vomiting or diarrhea. Your health care provider will determine whether flu testing is needed.

What is Swine Influenza?

Swine Influenza (swine flu) is a respiratory (lungs, breathing passages) disease of pigs caused by type A influenza virus that regularly causes influenza illness in pigs.

How many swine flu viruses are there?

Like all flu viruses, swine flu viruses are always changing. Pigs can get sick from avian (bird) flu and human flu viruses as well as swine flu viruses. When influenza viruses from different species infect pigs, the viruses can reassort (i.e. swap genes, change) and new viruses that are a mix of swine, human and/or bird flu viruses can be created. At this time, there are four main flu type A virus subtypes that have been isolated in pigs: H1N1, H1N2, H3N2, and H3N1.

Can people catch swine flu?

People do not usually catch swine flu viruses, but it is possible for people to catch the swine flu. This is most likely to happen after a person has close contact with a pig sick with the swine flu at a petting zoo, in barns or at fairs). Also sometimes people can pass the swine flu to other people. For example in 1988 multiple people got sick with the swine flu from pigs in



Wisconsin. There was proof that some of the patients gave the swine flu to health care workers.

How common is swine flu infection in people?

Swine flu in humans is not very common. From December 2005 through February 2009, 12 cases of swine flu in people have been reported. This total does not include the 7 cases reported on 4/23/09.

What are the symptoms of swine flu in people?

The symptoms of swine flu in people are most likely going to be similar to the symptoms of regular human seasonal influenza and include:

- Fever
- Lethargy
- Lack of appetite
- Coughing

Some people with swine flu also have experienced:

- Runny nose
- Sore throat
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea

Can people catch swine flu from eating pork?

No. Swine flu viruses are not transmitted by food. You can not get swine flu from eating pork or pork products. Eating properly handled and cooked pork and pork products is safe. Cooking pork to an internal temperature of 160°F kills the swine flu virus as well as other bacteria and viruses.

How does swine flu spread?

Flu viruses can be directly passed from pigs to people and from people to pigs. Human infection with flu viruses from pigs are most likely to occur when people are in close contact to infected pigs, such as in pig barns and livestock exhibits housing pigs at fairs. Person-to-person transmission of swine flu can also happen. Most likely this happens the same way as seasonal flu occurs in people, which is mainly person-to-person transmission through coughing or sneezing of people infected with the flu virus. People may catch the flu by touching something with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth or nose.

How can we know for certain that a person has the swine flu?

To know for certain that a person has the swine flu, a respiratory sample (nose and/or throat swab) would generally need to be taken within the first 4 to 5 days of illness. The sample would then be sent to a special laboratory for testing.

What medications are available to treat swine flu infections in people?

There are four different antiviral drugs that used in the US to treat the flu: amantadine, rimantadine, oseltamivir and zanamivir. More information on treatment recommendations can be found at www.cdc.gov/flu/swine/recommendations.htm.

