



H1N1 INFLUENZA [Swine Flu]

FACTSHEET



What is H1N1 influenza (Swine Flu)?

Swine flu is a respiratory disease of pigs caused by type A influenza viruses. Swine flu outbreaks among pigs are common. Like all influenza viruses, swine flu viruses change constantly. Pigs can also be infected by avian influenza and human influenza viruses. These viruses can swap genes and create new viruses that are a mix of swine, avian, and human influenza viruses. As a result, there are many different variations of swine flu viruses. There are four main influenza A subtypes that have been isolated from pigs: H1N1, H1N2, H3N2, and H3N1. The subtype identified in the 2009 swine flu outbreak is H1N1.

Can humans catch H1N1 ?

People usually do not get swine flu, but infections can and do occur among humans. Infections normally occur in persons with direct exposure to pigs. In the past, person to person swine flu transmissions was limited and not sustained beyond three people. From December 2005 through February 2009, the CDC received reports of 12 cases of human infection with swine flu in the United States.

Is this H1N1 virus contagious?

The CDC has determined that this swine influenza A (H1N1) virus is contagious and is spreading from human to human. However, as of April 2009, it is not known how easily the virus spreads between people.

How dangerous is this H1N1 ?

As of April 2009, the H1N1 (swine influenza A) has caused a number of deaths in Mexico, but has been relatively mild in the United States and other countries. The cause for the discrepancy in the severity of the cases between Mexico and other countries has not been determined.

What are the symptoms of H1N1 in humans?

The symptoms of H1N1 in people include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headaches, chills and fatigue. Severe illnesses, such as pneumonia and respiratory failure, and deaths have been reported with swine infection in people. These are similar to symptoms and outcomes of seasonal human flu. Persons with swine flu have also reported diarrhea and vomiting. Both swine flu and seasonal human flu may cause a worsening of underlying chronic medical conditions. If you experience symptoms, you should contact your healthcare provider.

What are the signs of more severe illness with H1N1 ?

So far, most H1N1 cases have been mild. However, if you experience any of the following warning signs, seek emergency medical care.

For children:

- 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 that improve but then return with fever and worse cough
- Fever with a rash

For Adults:

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness
- Severe or persistent vomiting

How does H1N1 spread?

H1N1 (swine influenza A) is thought to spread from person to person through coughing or sneezing of people with the virus. Persons may also become infected by touching something, such as a desk or door knob, contaminated with flu viruses and then touching their eyes, nose, or mouth.

Can I get H1N1 from eating or preparing pork?

No. Swine flu viruses are not spread by food. You cannot get swine flu from eating pork or pork products. Eating properly handled and cooked pork products is safe.

How long can an infected person spread H1N1 to others?

People with H1N1 should be considered contagious as long as they have symptoms and up to 7 days following the onset of illness. Children, especially younger children, might be contagious for longer periods.

Which medications are used to treat swine flu?

The CDC recommends the antiviral drugs TAMIFLU (oseltamivir) or RELENZA (zanamivir) for treatment and/or prevention of infection with the swine flu virus. These antiviral medications work by keeping flu viruses from reproducing in your body and can make your illness milder or help you recover faster. They may also prevent serious flu complications. Antiviral drugs work best if started within 2 days of symptoms. Antiviral drugs are prescription medicines.

What can I do to protect myself from getting sick?

As of April 2009, a vaccine is not available to protect against H1N1 (swine influenza A). The following steps may protect you from the flu viruses and other germs:

- Cover your nose and mouth with tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw tissue in the trash after you use it. If tissue is not available, cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve and not your hands.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners may also be used.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- If you get sick with influenza, the CDC recommends that you stay home from work or school and limit contact with others.

Should I wear a mask or a respirator?

Masks may reduce the amount of contagion an infected person releases into the air, but they are not designed to prevent people from inhaling germs that are spread via airborne or droplet transmission.

Respirators filter the air and may offer some protection against H1N1 (swine influenza A). If exposure concern is related to your employment, your employer is required by OSHA/PESH to implement a respiratory protection program before issuing respirators. This includes a written respiratory protection program, risk assessment, medical evaluation, fit testing and fit checking. Most PEF members who did not use respirators before the 2009 swine flu outbreak are not likely to need respirators to perform their duties during the outbreak.

Additional information may be obtained from the following:

<http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/>

http://www.health.state.ny.us/diseases/communicable/influenza/seasonal/swine_flu/

Employee Resources

- **Questions and Answers:**

http://www.health.state.ny.us/diseases/communicable/influenza/seasonal/swine_flu/swine_flu_questions_and_answers.htm

New York State Swine Flu (H1N1) hotline: 1-800-808-1987

New York City Residents call 311

Upon request, the PEF Health & Safety Department will provide factsheets, standards, regulations, and other resources. Contact us at 518-785-1900, ext. 254 or 1-800-342-4306, ext. 254. Also, visit our webpage at www.pef.org.

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