

PUBLIC HEALTH FACT SHEET

Swine Flu

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What is swine influenza?

Swine influenza (swine flu) is a respiratory disease of pigs caused by a type of influenza virus. Outbreaks of swine flu happen regularly in pigs. People do not normally get swine flu, but human infections can and do happen. Most commonly, human cases of swine flu happen in people who are around pigs but it's possible for swine flu viruses to spread from one person to another. In the United States there were 12 cases of swine flu in people from 2006 through 2008. In March and April 2009 there have been many more cases of swine flu than usual in both Mexico and the U.S. and the infections have spread from one person to another.

What are the symptoms of swine flu in people?

Swine flu causes symptoms very similar to seasonal (or human) flu. The most common symptoms of swine flu, like seasonal flu, are fever, cough, and sore throat and can include body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people also have diarrhea and vomiting. There have been some people with swine flu who have been sicker and have even died.

Is swine flu treatable in people?

People sick with any type of flu should make sure to drink enough fluids, get plenty of rest, eat healthy foods, wash hands frequently and stay home to avoid spreading the flu to other people. The kinds of drugs used to treat seasonal flu, called antivirals, can also be used to treat swine flu. There have been a few influenza viruses, including the most recent swine flu, that are resistant to some, but not all, of these drugs. Healthcare providers may recommend that people who are sick or appear to be sick with swine flu receive an antiviral medication.

How would I know if I have swine flu?

If you have symptoms of influenza as described above, and especially if you have recently traveled to an area where there have been human cases of swine flu, contact your healthcare provider who will decide what type of testing and treatment is right for you. To diagnose any kind of flu virus, a swab of the inside of your nose needs to be collected by a doctor. Identification of a swine flu virus requires special laboratory testing.

If you think you might have swine flu and you need to see your health care provider, you should call ahead and let them know you might have the flu. That way, precautions can be taken to avoid the spread of flu to others.

What if I recently traveled to a region where swine flu in humans has been found?

If you have recently traveled to an area affected by swine flu, be watchful for any flu-like symptoms. If you are experiencing any of these symptoms, stay home to avoid exposing others and contact your healthcare provider; your healthcare provider will decide what type of testing and treatment is right for you. To diagnose any kind of flu virus, a swab of the inside of your nose needs to be collected by a doctor. Identification of a swine flu virus requires special laboratory testing.

How can I protect myself and others from swine flu?

You can protect yourself and others from swine flu the same way that you can protect yourself from seasonal flu. Avoid holding, hugging, kissing, or shaking hands with anyone who has a cold or the flu. Wash your hands often with soap and warm water, or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. Avoid touching your nose, mouth or eyes. Clean things that are touched often like door handles, telephones, etc. If you get sick with a flu-like illness stay home from work and school and avoid contact with others so the virus does not spread.

