

Swine Influenza (H1N1)

Prepare...Not Panic

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Are you concerned about the recent headlines regarding the swine flu (H1N1)? Concern is a good thing especially if it drives planning and prompts action. That is what the health departments are encouraging people to do. Here are some questions and answers to the current situation, followed by some simple things you can do to help protect yourself and your family from not only swine flu (H1N1), but any disease outbreak.

*****Please keep in mind that due to the ever-evolving nature of the situation, information is subject to change*****

What is swine flu (H1N1)?

Swine Influenza (swine flu H1N1) is a respiratory disease of pigs caused by type A influenza viruses that causes regular outbreaks in pigs. People do not normally get swine flu, but human infections can and do happen. Swine flu viruses have been reported to spread from person-to-person, but in the past, this transmission was limited and not sustained beyond three people.

Are there human infections with swine flu (H1N1) in the U.S.?

In late March and early April 2009, cases of human infection with swine influenza A (H1N1) viruses were first reported in Southern California and near San Antonio, Texas. Other U.S. states have reported cases of swine flu (H1N1) infection in humans and cases have been reported internationally as well. An updated case count of confirmed swine flu (H1N1) infections in the United States is kept at <http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/> CDC and local and state health agencies are working together to investigate this situation.

What can I do to protect myself from getting sick?

There is no vaccine available right now to protect against swine flu (H1N1). There are everyday actions that can help prevent the spread of germs that cause respiratory illnesses like influenza. Take these everyday steps to protect your health:

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- If you get sick with influenza, CDC recommends that you stay home from work or school and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them.

What are the signs and symptoms of swine flu (H1N1) in people?

The symptoms of swine flu (H1N1) in people are similar to the symptoms of regular human flu and include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people have reported diarrhea and vomiting associated with swine flu (H1N1). In the past, severe illness (pneumonia and respiratory failure) and deaths have been reported with swine flu (H1N1) infection in people. Like seasonal flu, swine flu (H1N1) may cause a worsening of underlying chronic medical conditions.

What should I do if I get sick?

If you live in areas where swine influenza cases have been identified and become ill with influenza-like symptoms, including fever, body aches, runny nose, sore throat, nausea, or vomiting or diarrhea, you may want to contact your health care provider, particularly if you are worried about your symptoms. Your health care provider will determine whether influenza testing or treatment is needed.

If you are sick, you should stay home and avoid contact with other people as much as possible to keep from spreading your illness to others.

If you become ill and experience any of the following warning signs, seek emergency medical care.

In children, emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention include:

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

In adults, emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention include:

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

How does swine flu (H1N1) spread?

Spread of this swine influenza A (H1N1) virus is thought to be happening in the same way that seasonal flu spreads. Flu viruses are spread mainly from person to person through coughing or sneezing of people with influenza. Sometimes people may become infected by touching something with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth or nose. Infected people may be able to infect others beginning 1 day before symptoms develop and up to 7 or more days after becoming sick. That means that you may be able to pass on the flu to someone else before you know you are sick, as well as while you are sick.

How long can an infected person spread swine flu (H1N1) to others?

People with swine influenza (H1N1) virus infection should be considered potentially contagious as long as they are symptomatic and possible for up to 7 days following illness onset. Children, especially younger children, might potentially be contagious for longer periods.

What is the best way to keep from spreading the virus through coughing or sneezing?

If you are sick, limit your contact with other people as much as possible. Do not go to work or school if ill. Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. It may prevent those around you from getting sick. Put your used tissue in the waste basket. Cover your cough or sneeze if you do not have a tissue by coughing or sneezing into your elbow sleeve. Then, clean your hands, and do so every time you cough or sneeze.

What is the best technique for washing my hands to avoid getting the flu?

Washing your hands often will help protect you from germs. Wash with soap and water, or clean with alcohol-based hand cleaner. We recommend that when you wash your hands -- with soap and warm water -- that you wash for 15 to 20 seconds. When soap and water are not available, alcohol-based disposable hand wipes or gel sanitizers may be used. You can find them in most supermarkets and drugstores. If using gel, rub your hands until the gel is dry. The gel does not need water to work; the alcohol in it kills the germs on your hands.

Hygiene

Take a common sense approach to limit the spread of germs. Make good hygiene a habit and teach these habits to your children.

- Washing and drying your hands properly is one of the best ways of protecting yourself against the spread of germs. Wash hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water. You can use an alcohol based rub if soap and water is unavailable.
- Wash and dry hands frequently but especially before preparing and eating food, after coughing or sneezing, blowing noses, wiping children's noses, using the bathroom or caring for a sick person.
- Stay home if you are sick. During an outbreak of disease your local health department may recommend specific measures to limit your contact with others in an attempt to decrease the spread of the virus.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze and dispose of the used tissue in a covered, lined wastebasket right away. Cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve if you do not have a tissue.
- Try to stay several feet away from sick people to avoid the spread of germs.
- Stay healthy by eating a balanced diet, exercising regularly and getting plenty of



Get Informed

Knowing the facts is the best preparation. If a pandemic occurs, having accurate and reliable information will be critical. You can call the Ohio Department of Health Swine Flu (H1N1) Information Line at 1-866-800-1404 from 8:00 a.m.— 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. You can also find information on swine flu (H1N1) at <http://www.odh.ohio.gov> and click on the swine flu (H1N1) link.

Reliable, accurate and timely information is available at www.pandemicflu.gov and www.ohiopandemicflu.gov. These websites have a large amount of information to help individuals as well as churches, schools and businesses prepare.

Another source of information on swine influenza (H1N1) is the Center for Disease Control and Prevention Hotline at 1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-6348) and by visiting the website at <http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu>

Talk to your local health care provider and public health officials.

For more information during an actual pandemic or other public health emergency, it will be important to listen to local radio or cable stations and check the health department websites.

<http://www.ci.findlay.oh.us>

<http://www.co.hancock.oh.us/bdhealth>