

Questions & Answers about Swine Flu

Brought to you by Baca County Public Health Agency

Some information in this document provided by CDC

What is swine flu?

Swine Influenza (swine flu) is a respiratory disease of pigs caused by type A influenza viruses. 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 person to person also.

Is this swine flu virus contagious?

CDC has determined that this virus is contagious and is spreading from human to human. However, at this time, it not known how easily the virus spreads between people.

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

The symptoms of swine flu in humans are similar to the symptoms of seasonal flu and include:

- Fever greater than 100 degrees
- Body aches
- Coughing
- Sore throat
- Respiratory congestion
- In some cases, diarrhea and vomiting

How serious is swine flu infection?

Like seasonal flu, swine flu in humans can vary in severity from mild to severe. Between 2005 until January 2009, 12 human cases of swine flu were detected in the U.S. with no deaths occurring. However, swine flu infection can be serious. In September 1988, a previously healthy 32-year-old pregnant woman in Wisconsin was hospitalized for pneumonia after being infected with swine flu and died 8 days later. A swine flu outbreak in Fort Dix, New Jersey occurred in 1976 that caused more than 200 cases with serious illness in several people and one death.

How do you catch swine flu?

Spread of swine flu can occur in two ways:

- Through contact with infected pigs or environments contaminated with swine flu viruses.
- Through contact with a person with swine flu. Human-to-human spread of swine flu has been documented and is thought to occur in the same way as seasonal flu. Influenza is thought to spread mainly person-to-person through coughing or sneezing of infected people.

Are there medicines to treat swine flu?

Yes. CDC recommends the use of oseltamivir (Tamiflu) or zanamivir (Relenza) for the treatment and/or prevention of infection with these swine influenza viruses. Antiviral drugs are prescription medicines (pills, liquid or an inhaler) that fight against the flu by keeping flu viruses from reproducing in your body. If you get sick, antiviral drugs can

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make your illness milder and make you feel better faster. They may also prevent serious flu complications. For treatment, antiviral drugs work best if started soon after getting sick (within 2 days of symptoms).

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

People with swine influenza 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 can I do to protect myself from getting sick?

There is no vaccine available right now to protect against swine flu. 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:

- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and warm water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer to get rid of most germs and avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Stay home when you are sick to avoid spreading illness to co-workers and friends.
- Cough or sneeze into your elbow or a tissue and properly dispose of used tissues.
- Stay healthy by eating a balanced diet, drinking plenty of water and getting adequate rest and exercise.

What should I do if I get sick?

Individuals who experience the above symptoms should contact their physician, who will determine whether 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.

Can I get swine influenza from eating or preparing pork?

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

The Baca County Public Health Agency encourages patients to use their judgment about whether they're sick enough to see a doctor, and to definitely do so if they've recently been to a high-risk area, such as Mexico.

Additional information is available at:

Baca County Emergency Management Website:

<http://www.bacadem.com>

Baca County Public Health Agency Website:

<http://www.bacadem.com/publichealth.htm>

CDC Website:

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

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