

SWINE FLU

What is swine flu?

Swine flu is a respiratory disease, caused by H1N1 strain of influenza type A virus which used to infect pigs only till recent past but nowadays manifests in humans also.

What are the symptoms of swine flu?

The symptoms are fever, fatigue, body ache, lack of appetite, cough and sore throat. Some people have reported diarrhea and vomiting associated with swine flu.

How does swine flu spread?

Spread of this disease occurs in the same way 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 like doorknobs, telephones, water tap.

Infected people may 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 is swine flu diagnosed?

Suspected cases should contact health officials soon, who will determine whether it is a case that requires further respiratory precautions (such as a surgical mask), diagnostic testing and treatment with anti-viral drugs.

Generally nasal & throat swab are the standard method to confirm diagnosis.

What are the treatment options for swine flu?

Swine flu victims can be easily treated with antiviral drugs which can make illness milder and gives faster relief from symptoms. They may also prevent serious flu complications. For treatment, antiviral drugs work best if started soon after getting sick (within 2 days of symptoms).

Is there a vaccine available to prevent swine flu?

No. There is no vaccine available presently in market to treat present strains of swine flu.

Which are the preventive measures for swine flu?

- ✓ General infection control practices like staying in good general health
- ✓ Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids, and eat nutritious food

- ✓ Avoid close contact with sick people
- ✓ Covering your nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing, using a tissue when possible
- ✓ Disposing of dirty tissues promptly and carefully
- ✓ Maintaining good basic hygiene, for example washing hands frequently with soap and water for 15-20 seconds especially after returning home from outside
- ✓ If soap and water are not available, alcohol-based disposable hand wipes or gel sanitizers may be used
- ✓ If using gel, rub your hands until the gel is dry. The gel doesn't need water to work; the alcohol in it kills the germs on your hands
- ✓ Avoid close contact with people who appear unwell and who have fever and cough

Steps to follow if visited country or area affected by swine influenza?

- ✓ If you have recently visited one of the countries or areas where human cases of influenza have been identified, it is important for you to monitor your health closely for seven days after your visit to the affected area
- ✓ There is no need for you to isolate yourself from other people as long as you remain well.
- ✓ If during this period you develop any symptoms, you should contact your family physician for further management.
- ✓ It is important you avoid contact with other people as much as possible until the results of your tests are back
- ✓ Your household contacts should also monitor their health and follow the above advice if they get symptoms