

Swine Influenza (H1N1)

Frequently Asked Questions

Swine Flu

What is Swine Influenza?

Swine Influenza (swine flu) is a respiratory disease of pigs caused by type A influenza virus that regularly causes outbreaks of influenza in pigs. Swine flu viruses cause high levels of illness and low death rates in pigs. Swine flu viruses may circulate among swine throughout the year, but most outbreaks occur during the late fall and winter months similar to outbreaks in humans.

Swine Flu in Humans

What are the symptoms of swine flu in humans?

Fever, body aches, runny nose, sore throat, nausea, or vomiting or diarrhea.

Can people catch swine flu from eating pork?

No. Swine influenza viruses are not transmitted by food. You cannot get swine influenza from eating pork or pork products.

How does swine flu spread?

Swine flu is spread the same way as seasonal flu which is mainly person-to-person transmission through coughing or sneezing of people infected with the influenza virus. People may become infected by touching something with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth, nose, or eyes.

How can humans infected with swine influenza be diagnosed?

To diagnose swine flu influenza A virus, a respiratory specimen would generally need to be collected within the first 4 to 5 days of illness (when an infected person is most likely to be shedding the virus). However, some persons, especially children, may shed the virus for 10 days or longer. Identification as a swine flu influenza A virus requires sending the specimen to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for laboratory testing.

What medications are available to treat swine flu infections in humans?

At this time, CDC recommends the use of oseltamivir (i.e. **TAMIFLU**) or zanamivir (i.e. **RELENZA**) for the treatment and/or prevention of infection with swine influenza virus. (See Antiviral Drugs)

Antiviral Drugs

Antiviral drugs are prescription medicines (pills, liquid or an inhaler) with activity against influenza viruses, including swine influenza virus. Antiviral drugs can be used to **treat** swine flu or to **prevent** infection with swine flu virus. *These medications must be prescribed by a health care professional.*

There are four influenza antiviral drugs approved for use in the United States (oseltamivir, zanamivir, amantadine and rimantadine). The swine influenza (H1N1) virus that has been detected in humans in the United States and Mexico is resistant to amantadine and rimantadine so these drugs will not work against the swine influenza virus. However, laboratory testing on this swine influenza (H1N1) virus so far indicates that it is susceptible (sensitive) to oseltamivir (**TAMIFLU**) and zanamivir (**RELENZA**).



Treatment vs. Prevention

Treatment: If you get sick, antiviral drugs can make your illness milder and make you feel better faster. They may also prevent serious influenza complications. Influenza antiviral drugs work best when started soon after illness onset (within two days), but treatment with antiviral drugs should still be considered after 48 hours of symptom onset, particularly for hospitalized patients or people at high risk for influenza-related complications.

Prevention: Influenza antiviral drugs also can be used to prevent influenza when they are given to a person who is not ill, but who has been or may be near a person with swine influenza. **When used to prevent the flu, antiviral drugs are about 70% to 90% effective.** When used for prevention, the number of days that they should be used will vary depending on a person's particular situation.

Vaccine

Is there a vaccine for the Swine Flu (H1N1)? No. The CDC is currently working on a vaccine, which may take 4 – 6 months. 4 to 6 months is the normal timeframe to identify a particular strain, develop a vaccine, test the vaccine, and mass produce the same for distribution.

Once the vaccine is available, does it actually prevent you from acquiring H1N1? No, the vaccine is not 100%. There is a chance that the H1N1 could transform itself into a different strain. This is very similar to the annual flu vaccine, which is developed prior to the flu season based upon previous research of the previous strain.

What Can I Do Right Now

- Wash your hands often, using plenty of soap and warm water. If not possible, use alcohol-based hand sanitizer liquids.
- Cover coughs and sneezes with tissues. Or if necessary, cough into the inside of your elbow sleeve area. It may prevent those around you from getting sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth. Germs are often spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose, or mouth.
- Stay away from others as much as possible when sick.
- Stay home from work, school, and errands if you become ill.
- Get plenty of rest, be physically active, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids, and eat nutritious food.

