

INFLUENZA and SWINE INFLUENZA: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) 4/26/09

What is Influenza (the flu)?

Influenza, commonly known as "the flu," is a respiratory disease caused by a virus. There are 2 main types of influenza virus, A and B. Each type includes many different strains that tend to change each year.

What is Swine Influenza?

Swine Influenza (swine flu) is a respiratory disease of pigs caused by type A influenza. These viruses do not normally cause disease in humans. However, infections in humans do occasionally occur. Most commonly when they do occur, it is the result of direct contact with infected pigs. There have been documented cases of one person spreading swine flu to others. For example, an outbreak of swine flu infection in pigs in Wisconsin in 1988 caused multiple infections in humans.

What are the symptoms of Influenza?

Symptoms usually appear 1 to 3 days after exposure. Influenza symptoms may include headache, fever, chills, cough, sore throat and body aches. Most people do *not* have diarrhea and vomiting. Although most people are ill for less than a week, some people become seriously ill and may need to go to the hospital.

What are the symptoms of Swine Influenza in humans?

The symptoms of swine flu are the same as the symptoms of influenza.

How common is Swine Influenza in humans?

Normally, one to two cases of swine flu in humans are identified in the U.S. each year. Since April 15, 2009, 7 swine flu cases have been reported from California and Texas.

How many people have been found to have swine flu infection?

In the U.S., there have been 20 confirmed cases—7 in southern California, 2 in Texas, 8 in New York City, 2 in Kansas and 1 in Ohio. More cases have been reported from Mexico. There are reports of possible cases in New Zealand and Israel among travelers coming from Mexico.

How did these people get the swine flu infection?

At this time, it is unknown how these people were infected. CDC is investigating this.

What is being done about this in the U.S.?

CDC is working very closely with state and local officials to investigate these cases and to identify any other cases that might occur.

Will a flu shot protect me from getting the swine flu?

At this time, we do not know if the flu shot that is being used for this flu season will be effective against swine flu. It is felt to be unlikely that the current flu shot will protect against swine flu. The flu shot will protect against other types of flu that are circulating this season.

If I want a flu shot, can I still get one?

You should call your doctor to find out if s/he has vaccine available. At this point in the flu season, most providers have given all the flu vaccine that they have. Your public health office may also have vaccine available. Call ahead to find out.

Can swine flu infection be treated?

Some antiviral medications may be effective against the swine flu virus as well as other flu viruses.

How is Influenza spread?

Influenza may be spread through contact with mucus or droplets from the nose and throat of an infected person, especially when s/he coughs or sneezes.

How long are people contagious?

The contagious period varies, but persons can probably begin to spread the germ 1 day before they feel sick and for a week after their symptoms first appear.

Who gets Influenza disease?

Anyone can get the flu. However, in some persons it may be more serious. Groups of people who may become more seriously ill include the elderly, infants, people with chronic illnesses (such as lung disease, heart disease, cancer, or diabetes) or those with weak immune systems. Persons need to be vaccinated *every year* to protect themselves from influenza.

What treatment is available for people with Influenza?

Rest, liquids and over-the-counter medicine are the usual treatments. Some prescription antiviral drugs may prevent or reduce the severity of influenza. Antibiotics will not cure the flu. Aspirin should not be given to children with influenza because of the possibility of causing a complication called Reye syndrome.

Do infected people need to be kept home from school, work or daycare?

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People who are sick should stay home until they feel well enough to return and have not had a fever for 24 hours.

How can I protect myself and my family from getting Influenza?

- All persons who are in the following high risk groups for illness from influenza should be vaccinated every year;
 - Adults 65 years of age and older;
 - Residents of nursing homes and long-term care facilities;
 - People who have certain chronic health problems or have weak immune systems;
 - Children and adolescents (aged 6 months-18 years) on long-term aspirin therapy;
 - Women who will be pregnant during the influenza season;
 - All children aged 6-59 months;
 - People who live with or care for people in any of the above high risk groups, including healthcare workers.
- Persons not in high risk groups can also receive a flu shot if there is enough vaccine
- Wash hands well and often with soap, and teach children to wash their hands too.
- Always cover your nose and mouth when you cough or sneeze, and then wash your hands.
- In some situations, antiviral medications may be used to prevent or treat the flu - talk to your healthcare provider for more information.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.

SWINE INFLUENZA HOTLINE:

866-850-5893