

# Swine Flu

The swine flu outbreak continues to grow, with more documented cases in the United States and internationally. As of 11 AM today, there are 64 cases of swine flu in the U.S. and additional countries reporting confirmed cases. The World Health Organization has raised the worldwide pandemic alert level to phase 4. This marks a significant upwards shift in the risk for a pandemic.

Below are answers to frequently asked questions regarding swine flu:

What is swine flu?

Swine Influenza (swine flu) 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.

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

The symptoms of swine flu in people are similar to the symptoms of regular human flu and include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills, runny nose and fatigue. Some people have reported diarrhea and vomiting associated with swine flu.

How does swine flu 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.

How can someone with the flu infect someone else?

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.

What should I do to keep from getting the flu?

First and most important: wash your hands. Try to stay 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.

Are there medicines to treat swine flu?

Yes. If you get sick, antiviral drugs can 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).

What surfaces are most likely to be sources of contamination?

Germs can be spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose, or mouth. Droplets from a cough or sneeze of an infected person move through the air.

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:

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. The tissue should be properly disposed of after use. If a tissue is not readily available, you should cough or sneeze into the inner part of your elbow, not your hands.
- 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.
- Seek medical attention at the earliest onset of symptoms. Your health care practitioner will determine if you are a candidate for further respiratory precautions (such as a surgical mask), diagnostic testing and treatment with prescription medications.

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

Washing your hands often will help protect you from germs. It is recommended that you wash your hands with soap and warm water for at least 15 to 20 seconds. 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.

What should I do if I get sick?

If you live in an area 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 should seek medical attention. Your health care provider will determine whether influenza testing or treatment is needed.

Do not take aspirin for flu symptoms. Motrin (or similar products) and Tylenol (or similar products) may be used for relief of symptoms.

You should go to the Emergency Room if you have one of the following warning signs:

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

Can I get swine influenza from eating or preparing pork?

Usually not. But possible in some cases. Hence, avoid eating pork.