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Health Department

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Swine Flu

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What is swine influenza (flu)?

Swine Influenza 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 but low death rates in pigs. Swine influenza viruses may circulate among swine throughout the year, but most outbreaks occur during the late fall and winter months similar to outbreaks in humans.

Can People Catch Swine Flu?

Although not typical, human infections with swine flu have occurred, and are currently occurring in the United States and Mexico.

Most commonly, these cases occur in persons with direct exposure to pigs (e.g. children near pigs at a fair or workers in the swine industry). There have been documented cases of a person spreading swine flu to other people. For example, an outbreak of apparent swine flu infection in pigs in Wisconsin in 1988 resulted in multiple human infections.

What are the symptoms of Swine Flu in Humans?

Some people with swine flu report the following symptoms:

- Runny nose
- Sore throat
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea

Besides these symptoms, typical seasonal influenza symptoms are often present. These include:

- Fever
- Lethargy
- Lack of appetite
- Coughing

What should I do if I have these symptoms?

See your healthcare provider if you are very sick with the symptoms identified AND have recently traveled to a part of the world where swine flu has been reported (Mexico; San Diego and Imperial County, California; Guadalupe County/San Antonio, Texas). Be sure to let your doctor know when and where you were traveling and whether you visited any farms or open-air markets. Visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Web site for travel health information: www.cdc.gov/travel/.

How does Swine Flu spread?

Influenza viruses can be directly transmitted from pigs to people and from people to pigs. Human infection with flu viruses from pigs are most likely to occur when people are in close proximity to infected pigs, such as in pig barns and livestock exhibits housing pigs at fairs.

Human-to-human transmission of swine flu occurs in the same way seasonal flu transmits. This is mainly 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 or nose.

What can I do now to reduce the risk of illness?

By practicing good hygiene habits, you can help stop germs from spreading.

- Cover your mouth and nose with tissue when coughing and sneezing
- Wash your hands often
- Stay home when you are sick
- Keep your hands away from your mouth and nose

Do all you can to improve your health.

The healthier you are, the more resistant your body is to disease. It's a better time than ever to quit smoking, improve your eating habits, exercise regularly, and get regular medical checkups and recommended immunizations.

How do you treat Swine Flu?

If seen by a health care provider in the first 48 hours of symptoms, medication may be prescribed that can lessen the symptoms and shorten the duration of illness.