

Swine Flu Are You at Risk?

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The recent Swine Flu outbreak has reached pandemic levels recently being classified by the World Health Organization as a Phase 5 alert. Phase 5 alerts indicate that the virus is transferable from person to person, and has the potential to lead to wide spread human infection.

With the growing level of media attention to the recent outbreaks, we wanted our members to stay informed of the current status and to be aware of ways in which you can protect yourself, as well as others from the swine flu.

In an effort to help spread awareness of swine flu, the following information has been compiled based on current recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). WWW.CDC.GOV

What is the Swine Flu?

The swine flu is a respiratory disease caused by the type A influenza virus typically found in pigs. The swine flu normally circulates through pigs, on an annual basis, coinciding with the transmission of human influenza, through late fall and early winter.

The Swine Flu consist of four major subtypes of influenza type A, they include H1N1, H1N2, H3N2, and H3N1, however the two most common within the pig population are the H1N1 and H3N2 subtypes with H1N1 dominating the majority of recent isolates.

It is important to remember that the swine H1N1 subtype is very different from the human H1N1 virus, and therefore vaccination in humans will not give protection against this swine subtype.

How is Swine Flu transmitted?

The Swine flu does not normally infect humans, however humans can be infected through direct contact with pigs. Recent cases of swine flu have indicated that human to human transmission is possible through similar mechanisms as the transmission of human influenza, such as coughing, or sneezing.

It is important to note that influenza viruses are not transmitted through cooked food products, this includes the swine flu. Therefore, it is not possible to catch swine flu by eating pork, or pork products as the virus is killed during the cooking process.

Individuals with the swine flu can infect others beginning 1 day before symptoms develop and up to 7 more days after becoming sick. This is why it is important to take realistic precautions, as you can spread the disease before you even know you are infected.

How common is the Swine Flu?

The swine flu virus is very common among pigs, with as many as 30% of pigs in the US showing signs of having had an infection. Traditionally, transmission of the swine strain of the virus to humans however is very rare.

Confirmed Cases in the US

As of May 1st, 2009, there have been 141 laboratory confirmed cases of the swine flu H1N1 in humans in the United States:

States	# of laboratory confirmed cases	Deaths
Arizona	4	
California	13	
Colorado	2	
Delaware	4	
Illinois	3	
Indiana	3	
Kansas	2	
Kentucky	1	
Massachusetts	2	
Michigan	2	
Minnesota	1	
Nebraska	1	
Nevada	1	
New Jersey	5	
New York	50	
Ohio	1	
South Carolina	16	
Texas	28	1
Virginia	2	
TOTAL COUNTS	141 cases	1 death

Symptoms of the Swine Flu

Symptoms of the Swine flu are similar to symptoms of human influenza, ranging from fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, chills and fatigue. As with human influenza, these symptoms can range from mild to severe, and some populations such as infants, the elderly and those with chronic medical conditions are be more susceptible to all strains of the flu. Symptoms of the swine flu can be treated similarly as strains of human influenza, with OTC medications as well as some prescription therapies.

Protecting yourself and others

- Everyday Actions
 - Cover your nose and mouth when sneezing or coughing, if a barrier such as a facial tissue is used, throw it in the garbage directly after use
 - Always wash your hands with warm soapy water, especially after sneezing or coughing
 - Alcohol-based instant hand sanitizers are also effective.
 - Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth
- Avoid close contact with the sick, or, if you are sick, avoid close contact with others.
 - Close contact with large groups increases the risk of person-person contact
 - Avoid large groups, especially if you are not feeling well
 - Current CDC recommendations include staying home from school or work if you are experiencing any of the above referenced symptoms
- Additional tips include, getting plenty of sleep, being physically active, managing your stress, staying well hydrated, and maintaining a healthy diet.

What to do if you become sick

While there is a risk of the spreading swine flu, it is important to remember that the symptoms are very similar to human influenza and even the common cold. If you live in an area where there have been confirmed cases of swine flu, and you are worried about your symptoms, it is best to contact your health care provider to determine if additional testing is needed.

If you become sick, avoid close contact with others, especially in large groups. While the symptoms may be minor, you should seek emergency medical care should you experience any of the following symptoms

Symptoms that need emergency medical care:

- In Children:
 - Difficulty breathing, bluish tinted skin, dehydration, irritability beyond the point of being consoled, extreme fever (especially with rash)
- In Adults:
 - Difficulty breathing, extreme chest or abdominal pain, extreme dizziness or confusion, or persistent vomiting

Treatment

Symptomatic treatment is appropriate for most cases of influenza including the swine flu. Ask your health care provider or pharmacist for a recommendation on appropriate over-the-counter treatment of your specific symptoms.

Prescription treatment with antiviral medications is appropriate for some patients. These medications can help decrease both the severity and duration of the illness. It is important to remember that anti-viral therapy is not right for everyone, and is recommended in the first 48 hours of symptoms.

Current Antivirals

Tamiflu (Oseltamivir) is approved for the treatment and prevention of both Influenza A and B in patients one year of age and older

Relenza (Zanamivir) is approved for the treatment of both influenza A and B in patients 7 years of age and older, and to prevent influenza A and B infection in people 5 years of age and older.

For more information, including updates and current recommendations, visit:

<http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/>

If you are traveling, please view the CDC travel advisories current recommendations:

<http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/notices.aspx>

Want to Save Money? Contact Us!

While it is important to keep open lines of communication with your physician and local pharmacist regarding your prescriptions, we understand that the amount of information received can sometimes be overwhelming.

We would like to remind you that our clinical department is here to help! We want to see our members taking the right medication at the right cost. While not all medications have a true generic, there are often therapeutic alternatives available that could provide the same benefit, while costing you less.

Please feel free to contact our clinical department at any time for questions regarding your prescriptions, or for cost saving alternatives.

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