

Falls Community Health

Swine Flu Questions and Answers

What is swine flu?

Swine Influenza (swine flu) is a respiratory disease of pigs caused by type A influenza viruses. Outbreaks of swine flu happen regularly in pigs. People do not normally get swine flu, but human infections can and do happen. The swine flu virus is now spreading 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
- fatigue
- body aches
- headache
- chills

Like seasonal flu, swine flu may cause a worsening of underlying chronic medical conditions.

How serious is swine flu infection?

Like seasonal flu, swine flu in humans can vary in severity from mild to severe. Between 2005 and January 2009, 12 human cases of swine flu were detected in the U.S. with no deaths occurring. However, swine flu infection can be serious. In September 1988, a previously healthy 32-year-old pregnant woman in Wisconsin was hospitalized for pneumonia after being infected with swine flu and died 8 days later. A swine flu outbreak in Fort Dix, New Jersey, occurred in 1976 that caused more than 200 cases with serious illness in several people and one reported death.

How do you catch swine flu?

Spread of swine flu can occur in two ways:

- Through contact with infected pigs or environments contaminated with swine flu viruses.
- Through contact with a person with swine flu. Human-to-human spread of swine flu is now occurring in the same way as seasonal flu. Influenza is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person by the coughing or sneezing of infected people.

Swine influenza viruses are **not** spread by food. You cannot get swine influenza from eating pork or pork products. Eating properly handled and cooked pork products is safe.

Are there medicines to treat swine flu?

Yes. CDC recommends the use of oseltamivir (Tamiflu) or zanamivir (Relenza) for the treatment and/or prevention of infection with these swine influenza viruses. Antiviral drugs are prescription medicines (pills, liquids, or inhalers) that fight against the flu by keeping flu viruses from reproducing in your body. 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).

How long can an infected person spread swine flu to others?

People with swine influenza should be considered potentially contagious as long as they are symptomatic, and possibly for up to seven days following illness onset. Children (especially younger children) might potentially be contagious for longer periods.

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. Throw the tissue in the trash after use.
- 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. Stay at least six feet away from people who are sick.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- If you display flu-like symptoms, CDC recommends that you stay home from work or school and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them.

What should I do if I get sick?

If you are sick, you should stay home and avoid contact with other people as much as possible to keep from spreading your illness to others.

Get emergency medical care right away for a sick person who:

- Has difficulty breathing or chest pain.
- If lips become purple or show blue discoloration
- Is vomiting and unable to keep liquids down
- Has signs of dehydration, such as dizziness when standing, or absence of urination; for infants, a lack of tears when they cry.
- Has seizures (for example, uncontrolled convulsions)
- Is less responsive than normal or becomes confused.

The City of Sioux Falls, Minnehaha County, and community health care organizations, as part of their emergency management response plans, have developed an Infectious Disease Response Plan. Portions of this plan are regularly exercised and updated during seasonal outbreaks of influenza. The Sioux Falls Health Department will provide regular updates as information becomes available.

For more information about Swine Flu, visit:

www.siouxfalls.org

www.cdc.gov/swineflu/swineflu_you.htm

Falls Community Health is located at
521 North Main Avenue (the corner of Fourth and Main),
adjacent to the Multi-Cultural Center (formerly the coliseum).
To schedule an appointment, call **367-8793**.

