

# Swine Influenza (Flu) – Notification

## Utah Public Health

4/30/2009



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### **1 - Are there any cases of swine influenza (flu) in Utah?**

To date, there have been no cases of illness due to swine influenza reported in Utah. Public health is working with clinicians to identify any cases should they occur. If you believe you might have influenza, please contact your health care provider for guidance.

### **2 - Where are the cases of swine influenza occurring in the United States?**

Cases of swine flu have been confirmed in California, Texas, Kansas, New York and Ohio.

### **3 - What is swine influenza?**

Swine influenza is a respiratory disease normally found in pigs and caused by type A influenza viruses. While outbreaks of this type of flu are most common in pigs, human cases of swine influenza do happen.

### **4 - How is it spread?**

Influenza viruses can be directly transmitted from pigs to people and from people to pigs. Human infection with influenza 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 influenza can also occur. This is thought to occur in the same way as seasonal influenza occurs in people, which is mainly person-to-person transmission through coughing or sneezing by people infected with the virus. People may become infected by touching something with influenza viruses on it and then touching their mouth or nose. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) says that swine influenza viruses are not transmitted by food or by eating pork.

### **5 - How long can an infected person spread swine influenza to others?**

A person can spread the swine influenza before symptoms begin. A person may be able to infect another person one day before symptoms start and up to seven or more days after becoming sick. People with swine influenza virus infection should be considered contagious as long as they show symptoms. Children, especially younger children, may be contagious for longer periods.

### **6 - Do I need to wear a surgical mask?**

Face masks or respirators are usually worn by an infected person or by persons in direct contact with infected persons. For example, if you are taking care of a person who has common or swine influenza, you will need a mask. Check with pharmacies, building supply stores, medical supply stores, hardware stores or department stores like Target or Walmart to purchase face masks.

### **7 - What are the symptoms of swine influenza?**

Symptoms of swine influenza are similar to those of the common flu.

- Fever and chills
- Sore throat
- Cough
- Headache, body aches, and fatigue
- Diarrhea and vomiting can also be present

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Watch for these **symptoms in children**. Seek emergency medical care if your child experiences any of the following warning signs:

- Fever with a rash
- Dehydration
- Fast breathing
- Bluish skin coloration
- Slow to wake or sluggish interaction
- Flu-like symptoms improve, but then return and cough worsens
- Severe irritability

For **adults**, emergency medical care is needed if you experience these warning signs:

- Difficulty breathing
- Dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Pain/pressure in the chest or stomach

### **8 - What should I do if I have symptoms or think I have been exposed to swine influenza?**

Contact your health care provider immediately to let your provider know you may have been exposed to the swine influenza virus. Make sure to tell your provider of your possible exposure to swine influenza so you can be separated from other patients and avoid spreading it to others in the clinic. Your provider will test you to determine if you have influenza and begin medications if necessary.

### **9 - What should I do if I get sick?**

If you live in areas 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 contact your health care provider, particularly if you are worried about your symptoms. Your health care provider will determine whether influenza testing or treatment is needed.

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

### **10 - How can I prevent swine influenza?**

Use the same precautions that you take to prevent the regular influenza (commonly known as seasonal influenza):

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home when you are sick. Avoid school, work and large crowds, if possible.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze and discard the tissue.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer when hand washing is not possible.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth, as germs can more easily gain entrance into your body through those areas.

### **11 - Is there a swine influenza vaccine available?**

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There is no vaccine available right now to protect against swine influenza, but the CDC has begun the process to get a vaccine developed.

### **12 - Will the influenza vaccine I got this year protect me from the swine influenza?**

No. The swine influenza virus is not contained in the 2008-2009 flu vaccine. However, it is still recommended that people get vaccinated with the influenza vaccine if they have not done so, because the influenza vaccine can still protect against other circulating influenza viruses. Additionally, it is recommended to get current vaccination status checked for all other recommended vaccines, including the pneumococcal (pneumonia) vaccine as well.

### **13 - Are there medicines for treating swine influenza in humans?**

Certain drugs such as [oseltamivir \(Tamiflu\)](#) or zanamivir (Relenza) may help lessen the severity of swine influenza. These antiviral drugs work best if started within two days of symptoms.

### **14 - Should I cancel my travel plans to Mexico?**

The CDC recommends that people avoid all non-essential travel to Mexico at this time. Non-essential travel includes vacations, cruises, etc.

### **15 - If I must travel to Mexico, what should I do to reduce my risk of infection?**

- First, prepare for your trip before you leave by monitoring the international situation; checking with your doctor about prescription antiviral medications; packing a travel health kit; reviewing your health insurance plan; and finding where you can get health care services while traveling.
- Also, practice healthy habits to help stop the spread of germs, including washing your hands often with soap and water, covering your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, and following all local health advice. This may include being asked to wear a surgical mask to protect others.
- Remember if you are traveling to Mexico to be sure you get a seasonal flu vaccination. It is not expected to protect against swine flu, but it will protect you against seasonal flu. Flu season runs through May in the northern hemisphere, and is just beginning in tropical and southern hemisphere countries.
- After you return from Mexico, pay close attention to your health for 10 days. If you become sick with a fever PLUS a cough and sore throat, or if you have trouble breathing during the 10 days after you return, see a doctor.

### **16 - Should I send my child to school or daycare?**

If your child is sick, the answer is no. If your child has been exposed to a confirmed or a suspected case of swine influenza, do not send them to school or to the daycare.

As part of any good prevention measure, reinforce the message with your children to wash their hands frequently, avoid touching their hands to their mouth and nose, avoid close contact with others who are sick, and to cover their own mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing.

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### **17 - If I am sick, should I attend a public event, social gathering, etc.?**

If you are sick, or know that you have been exposed to a confirmed or suspected case of swine influenza, stay home and do not attend public events or social gatherings. A person can spread the influenza virus to others even before they begin to feel symptoms of being sick. A person may be able to infect another person one day before symptoms start and up to seven or more days after becoming sick.

### **18 - Will antiviral medications help to treat and influenza viruses?**

Yes. If you believe you are ill with an influenza virus see your doctor.

### **19 - What do I do if my doctor isn't sure how to test for the influenza virus?**

Contact the Local Health Department (LHD) in your area and tell them who your health care provider is, and they (your LHD) can help your provider find resources to test for swine influenza.

References: [http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/swineflu\\_you.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/swineflu_you.htm)  
<http://www.cdc.gov/travel/content/SwineFluMexico.aspx>