

SWINE FLU

FACTSHEET

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Administration
Division of Epidemiology, Disease Surveillance and Investigation
825 North Capitol Street, NE, Third Floor
Washington, DC 20002
202-442-9371 - Fax 202-442-8060
www.dchealth.dc.gov

What is Swine Influenza?

Swine Influenza (swine flu) 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 and 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.

Swine Flu in Humans

Can humans catch swine flu?

Swine flu viruses do not normally infect humans. However, sporadic human infections with swine flu have occurred.

How common is swine flu infection in humans?

In the past, CDC received reports of approximately one human swine influenza virus infection every one to two years in the U.S.

What are the symptoms of swine flu in humans?

The symptoms of swine flu in people are expected to be similar to the symptoms of regular human seasonal influenza and include fever, lethargy, lack of appetite and coughing. Some people with swine flu also have reported runny nose, sore throat, nausea, vomiting and diarrhea.

Can people catch swine flu from eating pork?

No. Swine influenza viruses are not transmitted by food. You can not get swine influenza from eating pork or pork products. Eating properly handled and cooked pork and pork products is safe. Cooking pork to an internal temperature of 160°F kills the swine flu virus as it does other bacteria and viruses.

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 can also occur. This is thought to occur in the same way as

seasonal flu occurs in people, which is mainly person-to-person transmission 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 eyes, mouth or nose.

How can human infections with swine influenza be diagnosed?

To diagnose swine influenza A infection, a respiratory specimen would generally need to be collected within the first 4 to 5 days of illness (when an infected person is most likely to be shedding virus). However, some persons, especially children, may shed virus for 10 days or longer. Identification as a swine flu influenza A virus requires sending the specimen to CDC through the District of Columbia's Public Health Laboratory.

What medications are available to treat swine flu infections in humans?

There are four different antiviral drugs that are licensed for use in the US for the treatment of influenza: amantadine, rimantadine, oseltamivir and zanamivir. While most swine influenza viruses have been susceptible to all four drugs, the most recent swine influenza viruses isolated from humans are resistant to amantadine and rimantadine. At this time, CDC recommends the use of oseltamivir or zanamivir for the treatment and/or prevention of infection with swine influenza viruses.

Is the H1N1 swine flu virus the same as human H1N1 viruses?

No. The H1N1 swine flu viruses are antigenically very different from human H1N1 viruses and, therefore, vaccines for human seasonal flu would not provide protection from H1N1 swine flu viruses.

Want more information?

Additional information about swine flu and other related health topics can be found at the website www.cdc.gov. The DC Department of Health promotes the health and safety of the District residents. For additional information, please call 202-442-9371.