

## Frequently Asked Questions Swine Flu May 5, 2009

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### What is Swine Flu?

Swine flu is a respiratory disease that affects pigs. It is caused by type A influenza viruses that causes regular outbreaks in pigs. People do not normally get swine flu, but human infections can and do happen. Infections happen the same way as seasonal flu occurs in humans, which is mainly spread between people through coughing or sneezing.

### 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, body aches, headache, chills, vomiting, diarrhea, and fatigue or extreme exhaustion. In the past, severe symptoms such as pneumonia, respiratory failure, and death, have been reported with Swine Flu infection. Like seasonal flu, Swine Flu may cause pre-existing chronic medical conditions to become worse.

### How is Swine Flu spread?

Swine Flu is thought to spread in the same way that seasonal flu spreads. Flu viruses are spread mainly from person to person through coughing or sneezing by people with the flu. Sometimes a person may become infected by touching something with flu viruses on it, and then touching their mouth or nose.

### **How long can an infected person spread Swine Flu to others?**

People with Swine Flu symptoms should be considered contagious for up to 7 days after a person has symptoms. Children, especially younger children, can be contagious for longer periods of time.

### **How long can viruses live outside the body?**

Some viruses and bacteria can live 2 hours or longer on surfaces like cafeteria tables, doorknobs, and desks. Frequent handwashing will help you reduce the chance of picking up the Swine Flu from these surfaces.

### **How serious is Swine Flu infection?**

Flu is always serious. About 36,000 people die each year in the US from flu-related causes. This outbreak poses the potential to be as serious as seasonal flu, if not more so. Like seasonal flu, Swine Flu in humans can vary in severity from mild to severe. Because this is a new virus, most people will not have immunity to it, and illness may be more severe and widespread as a result.

### **Can I get Swine Flu from eating or preparing pork?**

No. Swine Flu viruses are not spread by food. You cannot get Swine Flu from eating pork or pork products. Eating properly handled and cooked pork products is safe.

### **What can I do to protect myself and my loved ones from Swine Flu?**

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hands cleaners are also effective.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread that way.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- If you have flu-like symptoms, avoid going to work or school. This is to keep the virus from spreading to others.
- Following return from travel in Mexico, monitor your health for 10 days. If you become sick with a fever **and** a cough and sore throat, or if you have trouble breathing during those 10 days, see a doctor.

### **Another child was ill at my child's school or day care. What should I do?**

Just because someone in at your child's school or day care was ill doesn't mean the individual was ill with Swine Flu. Check with your local school for more information. It may not be necessary to pull your child out of school until you have been instructed to do so.

### **What should I do if I think I have Swine Flu?**

If you get sick, CDC recommends that you stay home from work or school and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them. If you become sick and experience any of the following warning signs, immediately get emergency medical care.

#### Emergency Signals and Symptoms In Children:

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Not waking up or not interacting
- Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough
- Fever with a rash

#### Emergency Signals and Symptoms In Adults:

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting

#### What are public health officials doing to combat Swine Flu?

The Riverside County Department of Public Health is collaborating with State and local partners during this health emergency to reduce the transmission and the severity of this virus. Public Health is also addressing this health emergency by ensuring medications are available and can be distributed in a rapid manner. Availability of medication allows medical professionals to treat a large number of patients in a short amount of time. Public Health is also coordinating resources with hospitals and clinics to ensure supplies and equipment are distributed according to need. Finally, Public Health is using education as its main ally in the effort to reduce the effects of the virus. Examples of education include training medical staff on the correct use of personal protective equipment, distributing preventive messages such as proper hand washing techniques/covering coughs and sneezes, and issuing guidance to childcare facilities on children with flu-like symptoms.

#### Where can I get more information about Swine Flu?

For more information, please visit the County of Riverside website at [www.news.co.riverside.ca.us/swineflu](http://www.news.co.riverside.ca.us/swineflu) or call **951-955-2000**. For additional information on Swine Flu, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) at [www.cdc.gov/swine](http://www.cdc.gov/swine) or call 1 800-CDC-INFO. Specific questions should be referred to your medical health care provider.