

Swine Flu Fact Sheet

What is Swine Flu?

Swine influenza viruses were first isolated in the United States in 1930. The clinical symptoms of influenza in pigs and people are remarkably similar, with fever, lethargy, lack of appetite and coughing prominent in both species. Influenza viruses can be transmitted directly from pigs to people.

(For more see: Fact Sheet: INFUEZA: Pigs, People and Public Health, W. Olsen, DVM, PhD, University of Wisconsin-Madison)

Why many health professionals are very concerned?

- The virus is easily spread from human to human
- The virus is mutating quickly, making it unpredictable. This could be the reason why it has killed dozens in Mexico but only caused minor sickness in the US so far.
- Those who have died or gotten very sick are largely young and healthy. A typical flu virus usually hits the elderly and sick hardest.

What are the typical signs of sickness?

- High fever
- Severe body aches
- Headache
- Extreme tiredness
- Sore throat
- Cough
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Vomiting and/or diarrhea (more common in children than in adults)

In children, emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention include:

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish or gray skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- 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
- In young children, warning signs include fast or troubled breathing, a bluish skin tone and irritability

In adults, emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention include:

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

What is the best technique for washing my hands to avoid getting the flu?

Washing your hands often will help protect you from germs. Wash with soap and water or clean with alcohol-based hand cleaner. General Practitioners recommend that when you wash your hands -- with soap and warm water -- that you wash for 15 to 20 seconds. When soap and water are not available, alcohol-based disposable hand wipes or gel sanitizers may be used. You can find them in most supermarkets and drugstores. If using gel, rub your hands until the gel is dry. The gel doesn't need water to work; the alcohol in it kills the germs on your hands.

How is the virus passed on between People

Germs can be spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose, or mouth. Droplets from a cough or sneeze of an infected person move through the air. Germs can be spread when a person touches respiratory droplets from another person on a surface like a desk, for example, and then touches their own eyes, mouth or nose before washing their hands.

How long are you contagious for

A period of 7 days.