



## SWINE FLU FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### **What is swine flu?**

Swine Influenza (swine flu) is a respiratory disease of pigs 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. Swine flu viruses have been reported to spread from person-to-person, but in the past, this transmission was limited.

### **Is this swine flu virus contagious?**

CDC has determined that this swine influenza A (H1N1) virus is contagious and is spreading from human to human. However, at this time, it is not known how easily the virus spreads between people.

### **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 and fatigue. Some people have reported diarrhea and vomiting associated with swine flu. Severe illness (pneumonia and respiratory failure) and deaths have been reported with swine flu infection in people, but the majority of the cases in the US have been mild. Like seasonal flu, swine flu may cause a worsening of underlying chronic medical conditions.

### **How does swine flu spread?**

Spread of this swine influenza A (H1N1) virus is thought to be happening in the same way that seasonal flu spreads. Flu viruses are spread mainly from person to person through coughing or sneezing of people with influenza. Sometimes people may become infected by touching something with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth or nose.

### **How can someone with the flu infect someone else?**

Infected people may be able to infect others beginning 1 day before symptoms develop and up to 7 or more days after becoming sick. That means that you may be able to pass on the flu to someone else before you know you are sick, as well as while you are sick.

### **What should I do to keep from getting the flu?**

First and most important: wash your hands frequently. Carry a hand sanitizer with you and use it before you eat or after you sneeze if you cannot wash your hands with soap and water. Try to stay in good general health. Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids, and eat nutritious food. Try not touch surfaces that may be contaminated with the flu virus. Avoid close contact with people who are sick. Avoid crowded areas.

### **Are there medicines to treat swine flu?**

Yes. CDC recommends the use of oseltamivir or zanamivir for the treatment of infection with these swine influenza viruses. Antiviral drugs are prescription medicines (pills, liquid or an inhaler) 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 virus infection should be considered potentially contagious as long as they are symptomatic and possible for up to 7 days following illness onset. Children, especially younger children, might potentially be contagious for longer periods.

**What surfaces are most likely to be sources of contamination?**

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 and then touches their own eyes, mouth or nose before washing their hands.

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

We know that 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 getting contamination from these common surfaces.

**How serious is swine flu infection?**

Most confirmed swine flu cases in the United States have been mild.

**Can I get swine influenza from eating or preparing pork?**

No. 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.

**Should I wear a mask?**

Information on the effectiveness of facemasks and respirators for the control of influenza in community settings is extremely limited. Thus, it is difficult to assess their potential effectiveness in controlling swine influenza A (H1N1) virus transmission in these settings. It is better to avoid close contact with people who might be ill and being in crowded settings instead of wearing a mask or respirator.

**How many cases do we have in the City?**

The Health Department has setup an information line (562-570-4499) for the latest information on the swine flu. This telephone number provides updates on confirmed swine flu cases in the City of Long Beach.

**Will Long Beach schools be closed?**

The Health Department is working closely with the Long Beach Unified School District (LBUSD), Long Beach City College (LBCC) and California State University Long Beach (CSULB) to monitor the situation at each school system. Since cases of swine flu have been confirmed in each system, we are now looking to see if there are more people becoming ill with influenza-like symptoms. If there appears to be an increase of illness at any individual school, closure of that school will be considered.

The LBUSD has setup a hotline for swine flu for concerned parents. Please refer LBUSD parents to (562) 562-997-8000 x7176.

**What do I do if I am sick?**

If you are sick, please contact your personal physician regarding testing and treatment. Stay at home. Do not go to work or school.

If you experience any of the following symptoms, seek immediate medical attention:

- Young children not drinking enough fluids, not waking up or not interacting, or being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
- Fever with a rash
- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness or feeling like you will faint
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting

### **Can my pet or animals get the swine flu?**

According to the American Veterinarian Medical Association, to date, there is no evidence that pets are susceptible to this new strain of influenza; it appears to be transmitted solely from person to person. Visit their website at

[www.avma.org/public\\_health/influenza/new\\_virus/new\\_flu\\_virus\\_faq.asp](http://www.avma.org/public_health/influenza/new_virus/new_flu_virus_faq.asp)

### **Is it safe to be around somebody who had swine flu?**

Yes, like the seasonal flu, after someone has swine flu, and all of their symptoms have gone away (after 7 or more days, in children it may be longer) they are no longer contagious and cannot spread the infection to anyone else.

### **Is there a vaccine?**

Right now, there is no vaccine for swine flu. As we speak, the United States Government and pharmaceutical companies are actively developing a vaccine.

### **Will the regular, seasonal flu vaccine protect me?**

At this time, we don't know if the regular, seasonal flu vaccine is effective in preventing swine flu. However, the regular, seasonal flu vaccine will protect against the seasonal flu, which is still circulating.

### **I recently traveled to Mexico. Should I be concerned?**

If you have traveled to Mexico, or other part of the United States where there are persons with confirmed swine influenza infection, or you have been exposed to someone with swine flu, and if it has been more than 7 days since you returned and you are not ill, you are probably not infected with the swine flu virus. If it has been less than 7 days and you are showing flu-like symptoms, **stay home** to avoid potential spreading and contact your health care provider to discuss possible testing and treatment. Remember, only a health care provider can diagnose the swine flu virus by assessing the illness and obtaining the appropriate tests. Many symptoms of respiratory diseases can be similar to swine flu.

### **Should I avoid people who recently traveled to Mexico?**

If the person traveled to Mexico more than 7 days ago and they are not ill, you do not need to avoid them. If the person traveled to Mexico, or other part of the United States where there are confirmed cases of swine flu, or has been exposed to someone with swine flu less than 7 days ago and/or they are showing flu-like symptoms, it is best to avoid physical contact with them. Tell them to stay home to avoid potential spreading and contact their health care provider to discuss possible testing and treatment. Be sure their doctor is made aware of their recent travel. Only a health care provider can diagnose the swine flu virus by assessing the illness and obtaining the appropriate tests and many symptoms of respiratory diseases can be similar.