

Swine Flu Update (H1N1 influenza)

Are swine flu and influenza A H1N1 the same?

Yes. Swine flu and H1N1 are both names that refer to the same virus.

What is the swine flu?

Swine flu (influenza A H1N1) is a virus much like the common cold. Its origin is from influenza in pigs and birds. Since the virus was first detected in humans 2009, there is still much to learn about its spread among and effects upon people.

How do I catch swine flu?

Swine flu is spread by human to human, human to pig and pig to human contact. It is thought that when an infected person sneezes or comes into direct contact with another person, the swine flu can spread. This is most likely from the uninfected person coming in contact with the virus and not properly washing their hands, then touching their mouth or eyes. The swine flu virus may be able to live on surfaces for up to 8 hours. Proper hand washing for at least 15 seconds is the best way to keep from spreading the flu virus. If warm water and soap are not available, alcohol based hand sanitizers are an appropriate alternative. **You cannot catch swine flu by eating properly cooked pork.**

Who is at risk?

Although anyone can get the swine flu, young children less than 5 years old, infants, adults over 65 years old and those with a weak immune system may be at greater risk. Contact your health care provider to further determine your risk.

What are the symptoms of the swine flu?

For most people, symptoms will resemble the common cold, such as fever, chills, coughing, nausea, vomiting and diarrhea, among others. If you experience nausea, vomiting and diarrhea lasting more than 24 hours, a fever greater than 103 F and coughing that makes breathing difficult, contact your physician immediately.

What should I do if I think I have the swine flu?

It is very important that you seek medical care for a proper diagnosis and treatment, if necessary. Proper treatment according to the Center for Disease Control (CDC) is more effective when started within 48 hours of symptoms. Currently, oseltamivir (Tamiflu) and zanamivir (Relenza) are effective in treating the swine flu.

Will the flu vaccine protect me from getting swine flu?

Unfortunately, there is no vaccine to help protect against getting swine flu. The influenza vaccine is only effective against a few human types of flu virus. A vaccine is currently being developed, but may not be available for 6 months or longer. Therefore, it is very important to properly wash your hands to prevent or minimize infection.

If you have any questions or concerns about the swine flu, contact your physician or health care provider.

<http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/recommendations.htm>
<http://www.idsociety.org/Content.aspx?id=14220>
<http://www.who.int/en/>