

Swine Flu

It is the role of the Santa Clara County Public Health Department to inform the public, medical community and other local agencies about a potential health emergency, and the current outbreak of swine flu poses a potential risk to the residents of this community.

For current information regarding U.S. human cases of swine flu infection, visit the CDC website at <http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/investigation.htm>. CDC, state and local health agencies are working together to investigate this issue.

Most Recently Asked Questions

Are there any current travel restrictions?

As of April 27, the CDC issued a travel warning which recommends that U.S. travelers avoid all nonessential travel to Mexico. If you must travel to an area that reported cases of swine flu please refer the CDC website for more information at <http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/contentSwineFluMexico.aspx>

What if I have recently travelled to an affect area?

If you have recently travelled to an affected area and you are symptom-free after 7 days, you most likely do not need to be concern about the risk contracting the swine flu.

If you have a fever and at least one other flu symptom (see below), please contact your health professional immediately.

Why is there a concern?

These cases of swine flu in humans raise concerns since it is a new flu virus for which people have little or no immunity. Since this is a new flu virus there is no vaccine.

In this current situation, there is evidence of person-to-person transmission. If this new flu virus begins to spread easily person-to-person, it could sweep across the country and around the world in very short time. This would cause an influenza pandemic.

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 and not sustained beyond three people.

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 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 and chills. Some people have reported diarrhea and vomiting associated with swine flu. In the past, severe illness (pneumonia and respiratory failure) and deaths have been reported with swine flu infection in people. 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. 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.

Are there medicines to treat swine flu?

Yes. CDC recommends the use of two antiviral drugs for the treatment and/or prevention of infection with these swine influenza viruses. Antiviral drugs are prescription medicines (pills, liquid or an inhaler) that keep 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). Your physician will decide if you will need treatment with antivirals.

How long can an infected person spread swine flu to others?

People with swine influenza virus infection should be considered contagious as long as they are symptomatic and possible for up to 7 days following illness onset. Children, especially younger children, might 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.

What can I do to protect myself from getting sick?

There is no vaccine available right now to protect against swine flu. But common sense actions can help prevent the spread of germs. Take these everyday steps to protect your health:

- 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 hand cleaners are also effective.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- If you get sick with influenza, CDC recommends that you stay home from work or school and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them.

What should I do if I get sick?

If you live in areas where swine influenza cases have been identified and have a fever above 100 degrees and at least one other influenza-like symptoms such as head and body aches, chills, cough, trouble breathing, sore throat, vomiting and/or diarrhea, contact your health care provider, particularly if you are worried about your symptoms. Your health care provider will determine whether influenza testing or treatment is needed.

If you become ill and experience any of the following warning signs, seek emergency medical care.

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

- 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

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

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?

No, at this point we are not recommending that anyone wear masks except for health care providers who are working with patients who have flu like symptoms.

What is the difference between a pandemic and an epidemic?

An influenza pandemic is a worldwide outbreak of disease that occurs when a new influenza virus appears or “emerges” in the human population, causing serious illness and then spreads easily from person-to-person worldwide.

An influenza epidemic is a widespread outbreak usually caused by seasonal human influenza viruses. The current outbreak of swine flu in Mexico is unusual, but at this time it would be considered an epidemic involving a new influenza strain, not a pandemic.

What are public health officials doing?

Since the first cases were identified, federal and local health officials have monitored the situation and have tracked down others who had close contact with these cases.

Federal health officials have asked Public Health Departments around the country to begin monitoring the community for new cases of swine flu. The Santa Clara County Public Health Department continues to provide local physicians, medical providers and hospitals clinical information about swine flu, as well as how to take specimens from patients with flu-like symptoms and how to report results to the Public Health Department.

The Santa Clara County Public Health Department has increased active surveillance by having public health nurses work with all Santa Clara County hospitals to assist infection control staff and report findings quickly to the Department. The Public Health Department has also developed recommendations and guidance for local school districts, the San Jose International Airport, and other community partners to provide information to those that may be particularly at-risk.

Is this an act of terrorism?

At this time, the Public Health Department has every indication that this is a natural occurrence of disease. There is no data or evidence to suggest that this is an act of terrorism.

Where can I get more information?

For the latest updates including Home Care Guide instructions and checklist for preparing for an influenza emergency, visit the Santa Clara County Public Health Department website at www.sccphd.org. You can also call 2-1-1 or the Public Health Information Line at 408.885.3980.

For more information about swine flu, visit www.cdc.gov/flu/swine

For information in Spanish, visit http://www.cdc.gov/flu/swine/espanol/swine_espanol.htm