

To our students, faculty and staff:

As of April 30, 2009, the World Health Organization (WHO) will be using the technical scientific name H₁N₁ influenza A for swine flu.

1. What is Swine Flu

Swine flu is a respiratory disease affecting pigs that is caused by type A influenza virus. Swine influenza viruses may circulate among swine throughout the year, but most outbreaks occur during the late fall and winter months, similar to influenza outbreaks in humans. It causes high levels of illness but low death rates in pigs.

What is unusual about the present strain?

The new strain is a hybrid of swine, human and avian flu viruses and the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) says it can spread from human to human but the level of virulence is not yet clear.

2. Does Swine Flu affect humans?

Swine flu viruses that cause disease in pigs very rarely affect humans. However, sporadic human infections with swine flu have occurred. Most commonly, these cases occur in persons with direct exposure to pigs but there have also be documented cases of human-to-human spread of swine flu.

3. How does Swine Flu Spread to humans?

Swine flu spread to humans mainly through contact with infected pigs, which shed the virus in their saliva, nasal secretions and feces. Limited human-to-human transmission can also occur in the same way as seasonal flu occurs in people.

4. Can people catch Swine Flu from eating pork?

There is currently no evidence to suggest that swine flu can be transmitted to humans from eating pork or pork products that have been thoroughly cooked.

5. What are the symptoms of Swine Flu in humans?

The symptoms of swine flu in people are expected to be similar to the symptoms of regular human seasonal influenza. An early symptom is fever, and this is followed by cough, sore throat, runny nose and sometimes breathlessness a few days later.

6. How can human infections with swine flu be diagnosed?

To diagnose swine flu, a respiratory specimen would generally need to be collected within the first 4 to 5 days of the illness (when an infected person is

most likely to be shedding the virus). However, some persons, especially children may shed the virus for 10 days or longer.

7. What medications are available to treat swine flu infections in humans?

There are four different antiviral drugs for the treatment of influenza: amantadine, rimantadine, oseltamivir, and zanamivir. While most swine flu viruses have been susceptible to all four drugs, the most recent swine flu viruses isolated from humans are resistant to amantadine and rimantadine. At this time the US CDC recommends the use of oseltamivir (Tamiflu) or zanamivir (Relenza) for treatment and/or prevention of infection with swine flu viruses.

8. Is it safe to visit countries with cases of Swine Flu and will I be quarantined when I return? What travel precautions should I take?

The State Department recommends that "U.S. citizens avoid all nonessential travel to Mexico at this time." Some tour operators and airlines across the globe have canceled flights and holiday packages to sunshine destinations like Cancun and Cozumel. To be sure, contact your operator or airline. No quarantine situation has been advised by the World Health Organization (WHO) for swine flu at this time (April 29, 2009). If you travel to areas which have cases of swine flu, you should take note of the following measures to minimize your risk of acquiring swine flu:

Avoid contact with persons with symptoms of influenza.

Avoid crowded areas and maintain good ventilation. Stay at least six feet away from individuals.

Observe good personal and environmental hygiene. Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water frequently and when they are contaminated by respiratory secretions e.g. after sneezing and coughing.

Maintain good body resistance through a balanced diet, regular exercise, having adequate rest, reducing stress and not smoking.

9. What should I do if I suspect I have swine flu after returning from a country that has cases of swine flu?

You should consult your doctor as soon as possible and inform your doctor if you have symptoms of swine flu and had recently traveled to area which have cases of swine flu.

10. What should I do if I fall ill overseas?

You should consult a local doctor as soon as possible and refrain from traveling until you are certified fit by the doctor.

11. Does influenza vaccination help prevent Swine Flu?

There is no vaccine to protect humans from swine flu. The seasonal influenza vaccine is unlikely to protect against H₁N₁ swine flu viruses.

12. What Can I Do to Stay Healthy?

There are everyday actions people can take to stay healthy.

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.

- Influenza is thought to spread mainly person-to-person through coughing or sneezing of infected people.
- If you get sick, CDC recommends that you stay home from work or school and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them.

Q: Should we be worried about Swine Flu?

A: No - but we should take sensible precautions and stay informed. The World Health Organization has warned that the outbreak has "pandemic potential" and countries have been advised to step up surveillance and preparation in case the infection spreads rapidly.

Q: Does swine flu pose a more serious threat to pregnant women?

A: All viruses are potentially dangerous to pregnant women as their immune systems are under extra strain - but they should be fine if they eat well and keep up essential minerals.

Q: How long does the flu virus survive on surfaces?

A: The flu virus survives for roughly 24 hours on hard surfaces, two hours on soft surfaces.

Q: What is a pandemic?

A: If the flu spreads over a wide geographic area and affects a large proportion of the population it goes beyond an epidemic and becomes a pandemic.

According to the Health Protection Agency, an influenza pandemic is defined as a new or novel influenza virus that spreads easily between humans.

When new influenza viruses are introduced into the environment, humans do not have any natural immunity to protect against them.

Therefore, there is a risk that that new influenza viruses could develop into a pandemic, if the virus passes easily from human-to-human.

Q: Have humans been infected with swine flu in the past?

A: Cases of swine flu in humans usually occur after a history of exposure to pigs. For example, direct or close contact with infected pigs.

Cases of person-to-person transmission have been previously reported but are rare.

There have been no cases identified in the UK for at least 10 years.

A single case of swine flu was reported in November 2008 in Spain. The person only had mild symptoms.

For Additional Information click link: <http://www.uofmshs.typepad.com/>

Or copy and paste the link into your web browser.