

Key Facts about Swine Influenza (*Swine Flu*)

What is Swine Influenza?

Swine Influenza (swine flu) is a respiratory disease of pigs caused by the Type A influenza virus that regularly causes outbreaks of influenza in pigs. Swine flu viruses cause high levels of illness and low death rates in pigs.

How many swine flu viruses are there?

Like all influenza viruses, swine flu viruses change constantly. Pigs can be infected by avian influenza and human influenza viruses as well as swine influenza viruses. When influenza viruses from different species infect pigs, the viruses can swap genes and new influenza viruses can emerge. Over the years, different variations of swine flu viruses have emerged. At this time, there are four main influenza Type A virus subtypes that have been isolated in pigs, however, most of the recently isolated influenza viruses from pigs have been H1N1 viruses.

Is this swine flu virus contagious?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, known as 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 which include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. 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. Influenza A virus can live on surfaces, such as desks, for two hours.

How can someone with the flu infect someone else?

Infected people may be able to infect others beginning one day before symptoms develop and up to seven 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.

How is swine flu diagnosed?

Swine Flu can be diagnosed through a respiratory swab, nasal swab, in a physician's office, immediate care center or an emergency room.

What is the treatment for swine flu?

Antiviral drugs can be prescribed by your physician. Antiviral drugs will not cure the virus, but they will decrease the severity of the symptoms. Antiviral drugs must be used within the first 48 hours of the onset of symptoms.