

Influenza A (H1N1)/North America/Human (formerly “swine flu”)

What is swine flu and this new strain of influenza?

Swine flu is caused by influenza viruses that normally infect pigs. **The virus causing the current influenza outbreak is not a swine flu virus, but a combination of human, swine and bird viruses.** The flu virus causing the current outbreak, now called Influenza A (H1N1)/North America/Human, has adapted itself to be easily transmitted from person-to-person. Swine in the United States have not been and are not infected with this virus.

What are the symptoms of this new flu strain in humans?

The symptoms of the flu virus in this outbreak are similar to normal seasonal influenza. Symptoms include fever, cough, sore throat, headache, and muscle aches. Some people have also reported runny nose, nausea, vomiting and diarrhea. Symptoms usually appear about 2-7 days after exposure. People generally can spread flu viruses from 1-2 days before symptoms start to about 7 days after, but scientists are not exactly sure how long people may shed the currently circulating swine flu virus.

How does flu spread?

Human-to-human transmission of this flu occurs in the same way as seasonal flu occurs in people, which is mainly person-to-person transmission through coughing or sneezing of people infected with the influenza virus. People may become infected by touching something with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth or nose.

Can people catch the flu from eating pork?

No. Influenza viruses are not transmitted by food. You cannot get swine influenza from eating pork or pork products. Eating properly handled and cooked pork and pork products are safe. Cooking pork to an internal temperature of 160°F kills the swine flu virus as it does other bacteria and viruses.

How can human infections with influenza be diagnosed?

To identify the flu virus causing the current outbreak, a health care provider should collect a respiratory specimen (swab) within the first 4 to 5 days of illness (when an infected person is most likely to be shedding virus). The ISDH Laboratory will test the specimen and send it to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for further laboratory testing. Results are generally available within 48 hours after receipt at the ISDH Laboratory.

What medications are available to treat flu infections in humans?

There are four different antiviral drugs that are licensed for use in the US for the treatment of influenza: amantadine, rimantadine, oseltamivir and zanamivir. The North America/Human flu virus causing the current outbreak is resistant to amantadine and rimantadine. At this time, CDC recommends the use of oseltamivir (Tamiflu) or zanamivir (Relenza) for treatment of infection with this influenza virus. Use of these drugs for prevention of flu is not recommended at this time.

Are there any cases of Influenza A (H1N1)/North America/Human flu in Indiana?

There has been one confirmed case of this flu virus causing illness in Indiana as of 4/28/09. Additional cases are likely to occur.

How many cases of Influenza A (H1N1)/North America/Human flu have been identified?

Updated information about the number of confirmed cases in the U.S. can be found at www.cdc.gov/swineflu.

Is a vaccine available to prevent infection from this flu strain?

No.

Does getting the seasonal flu shot protect me from catching this flu virus?

Public health officials are unsure. It appears that it may not prevent you from catching this flu virus, but it might decrease the severity of your illness.

Should I travel to places known to have confirmed cases of Influenza A (H1N1)/North America/Human flu?

At this time there are no travel restrictions limiting travel to Mexico, other countries, or within the United States; however, the CDC recommends traveling to affected areas for essential purposes only. Travel advisories may change. If you travel to areas with confirmed cases, avoid contact with ill persons and practice good hand hygiene.

How do I prevent the spread of flu?

The best way to prevent transmission of flu is to avoid contact with ill individuals and practice good hand hygiene. Stay home and away from others if you become ill.

How do I get more information about this flu?

You can go to the CDC website at www.cdc.gov/swineflu or to the Indiana State Department of Health website at www.H1N1.in.gov. You may also visit the World Health Organization website at www.who.org.

For more detailed information, contact the ISDH Surveillance and Investigation Division at 317.233.7125.



**Indiana State
Department of Health**