

SWINE FLU & YOU: A LOCAL PERSPECTIVE

Flu Bulletin #1

Montgomery Township Health Department

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Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

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1. What is swine flu?

Swine flu is typically a respiratory disease of pigs caused by type A influenza viruses. Outbreaks of swine flu happen regularly in pigs. People do not normally get swine flu, but human infections can and do happen. Human cases of swine influenza A have occurred in the last several weeks and have been confirmed as such by laboratory tests.

2. Is this swine flu contagious?

CDC has determined that this virus is contagious and is spreading from human to human. Human cases of swine influenza A (H1N1) virus infection have been identified in the United States and internationally.

3. Is it in our area?

There are no cases of swine flu in New Jersey at this time, although the State Department of Health continues to investigate reports of illness.

A total of 20 cases of swine influenza infection in humans have been confirmed in five U.S. states: New York, California, Texas, Kansas and Ohio.) Investigations are ongoing to determine the source of the infections and whether additional people have been infected with swine influenza viruses. A major outbreak has occurred in Mexico City and there are cases in several other countries. For the latest travel notices, go to <http://www.cdc.gov/travel/>

4. Is there reason for concern?

Like seasonal flu, swine flu in humans can vary in severity from mild to severe. In the United States, illness has been relatively mild so far compared to the severe illness reported in Mexico. At this time only two of the 20 cases in the US have been hospitalized and all have recovered. As the situation evolves, New Jersey residents should stay informed as well as take precautions to prevent illness.

5. What are local, state & federal health authorities doing about it?

The Montgomery Health Department is in close contact with county and state health authorities. There is a well-organized communication/action network between federal, state and local health authorities, leading from the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on down to the local level. (If you do not subscribe to the Montgomery E-Bulletin service and would like to receive future bulletins about swine flu and other important community issues, type your email address in the E-bulletins box on the Montgomery Twp. website homepage at www.montgomery.nj.us. You may unsubscribe at any time.)

CDC is working very closely with officials in states where human cases of swine influenza A (H1N1) have been identified, as well as with health officials in Mexico, Canada and the World Health Organization. This includes sending staff to affected areas in the US and internationally to provide guidance and technical support. The CDC has activated its Emergency Operations Center to coordinate this investigation.

6. What can I do to keep healthy?

There is no vaccine available right now to protect against swine flu. 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, stay home from work or school and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them.**

7. What is the best way to keep from spreading the virus through coughing or sneezing?

If you are sick, limit your contact with other people as much as possible. Do not go to work or school if ill. Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. It may prevent those around you from getting sick. Put your used tissue in the waste basket. Cover your cough or sneeze if you do not have a tissue. Then, clean your hands, and do so every time you cough or sneeze.

8. What is the best technique for washing my hands to avoid getting the flu?

Washing your hands often will help protect you from germs. Wash with soap and water, or clean with alcohol-based hand cleaner. We recommend that when you wash your hands -- with soap and warm water -- that you wash for 15 to 20 seconds. When soap and water are not available, alcohol-based disposable hand wipes or gel sanitizers may be used. You can find them in most supermarkets and drugstores. If using gel, rub your hands until the gel is dry. The gel doesn't need water to work; the alcohol in it kills the germs on your hands.

9. What are the symptoms of swine flu?

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
- Chills
- Fatigue (tiredness)

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 other chronic medical conditions to become worse.

10. What do I do if I get sick?

If you become ill with influenza-like symptoms, including fever, body aches, runny nose, sore throat, nausea, or vomiting, or diarrhea, contact your health care provider, especially if you are worried about your symptoms. Your health care provider will determine whether influenza testing or treatment is needed.

If you are sick, you should stay home and avoid contact with other people as much as possible to keep from spreading your illness to others.

11. What are some signs that emergency medical attention is needed?

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

12. Can I get swine flu from eating or preparing pork?

No. Swine flu viruses are not spread by food. You cannot get swine flu from eating pork or pork products. Eating properly handled and cooked pork products is safe.

13. I work in New York City, should I be doing anything differently?

Like everyone else, you should take the above precautions. Because you work in an area where swine flu has occurred, if you become ill with influenza-like symptoms, including fever, body aches, runny nose, sore throat, nausea, or vomiting 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.

14. I have international travel plans; is there guidance available?

Travel notices are posted on the CDC website at <http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/>

15. Where do I go for the latest information?

The CDC website will be providing daily updates regarding the status of the swine flu investigation in the US. They also have information posted such as questions and answers regarding swine flu. The web address is www.cdc.gov/swineflu.

The Montgomery Health Department will issue further info to the public on this matter as needed as the situation evolves. Go to www.montgomery.nj.us to find this and any future bulletins on swine flu.

16. More questions?

Contact your doctor about your own specific health concerns. If you have questions about swine flu and community health, contact the Montgomery Twp. Health Department at (908) 359-8211 ext. 227 Mon-Fri. 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.