

# **SENATOR ADAMS PRESENTS NYS DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH Q & A ABOUT SWINE FLU**

## **Swine Flu Information**

For questions, call the Health Department's hotline at 1-800-808-1987. New York City residents should call 311.

For More Information, please visit:

### **NYS Department of Health:**

[http://www.health.state.ny.us/diseases/communicable/influenza/seasonal/swine\\_flu/](http://www.health.state.ny.us/diseases/communicable/influenza/seasonal/swine_flu/)

**NYC Department of Education:** <http://schools.nyc.gov/Home/Spotlight/swine.htm>

## **FAQ (source: NYS Department of Health)**

### **What is swine flu?**

Swine Influenza, also called swine flu, is a respiratory disease of pigs caused by type A influenza viruses (H1N1). Outbreaks of swine flu happen regularly in pigs. People do not normally get swine flu, but human infections can and do happen. Most commonly, human cases of swine flu happen in people who are around pigs but it's possible for swine flu viruses to spread from person to person also.

### **Is swine flu the same as seasonal flu?**

No. Seasonal flu is a contagious respiratory illness caused by human influenza viruses. It can cause mild to severe illness and at times can lead to death. Human flu viruses change a little bit every year which is why people can get sick from the flu more than once. It is also why a new flu vaccine is produced each year; the vaccine must be made to protect against the particular viruses circulating that year.

### **What can I do to protect myself from getting sick?**

There are everyday actions that can help prevent the spread of germs that cause respiratory illnesses like influenza. 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.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.
- 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 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 greater than 100°F, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Like seasonal flu, swine flu can vary in severity from mild to severe, and may cause a worsening of underlying chronic medical conditions. The severity of illness from the current swine flu strain is not yet clear. The few cases found in the United States so far have been mild.

### **Can swine flu be treated?**

Yes. This swine flu virus (H1N1) is susceptible to certain antiviral drugs used to treat flu infections (oseltamivir, or Tamiflu, and zanamivir, or Relenza). For treatment, antiviral drugs work best if started soon after getting sick (within 2 days of symptoms). If you become ill and are diagnosed with influenza, your doctor can determine if you should take antiviral drugs.

### **What should I do if I get sick?**

If you become ill with influenza-like symptoms, including fever, body aches, runny nose, sore throat, nausea, vomiting or diarrhea, you may want to contact your health care provider particularly if you are worried about your symptoms. Be sure to tell your doctor if you have recently travelled, especially to those areas where swine flu has already been confirmed, California, Kansas, New York City, Ohio, Texas and Mexico. 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.

### **Are there people infected with swine flu in the U.S.?**

Yes. Cases of human infection with swine influenza A (H1N1) have been confirmed in California, Texas, Kansas, Ohio and New York City. It is the same virus found in people in Mexico. The current U.S. case count is provided below.

### **What is the current swine flu situation in New York State?**

New York City health officials report that more than 100 students at the private St. Francis Preparatory School in Queens have come down with mild flu-like symptoms. CDC officials have confirmed that 45 of these students and staff have swine flu and it is the same strain of the virus as the one in Mexico. The school is cancelling classes for the remainder of the week in response to the outbreak. The NYCDOHMH has issued recommendations for New York City residents on their web site, at: <http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/home/home.shtml>

### **What is New York State doing to identify additional swine flu cases in New York?**

The New York State Department of Health conducts flu surveillance throughout the year. To ensure rapid detection if any swine flu (H1N1) cases occur here, the New York State Department of Health is testing selected laboratory samples from people who are suspected of having H1N1 swine flu.

### **Should I keep my child home from school as a precaution?**

No. Parents do not need to keep otherwise healthy children home from school unless directed to do so by local school and health officials.

Children who are ill should not attend school. In this case, monitor your child for influenza-like symptoms, including fever, body aches, runny nose, sore throat, nausea, vomiting or diarrhea, and keep your child home if they are sick. You may want to contact their health care provider, particularly if symptoms are severe. Be sure to tell your doctor if you have recently traveled, especially to those areas where swine flu has already been confirmed, including California, Kansas, New York City, Ohio, Texas and Mexico. Your health care provider will determine whether influenza testing or treatment is needed.

### **How are people getting sick from swine flu?**

CDC has determined that this H1N1 swine flu virus is spreading from person to person. Spread from person to person is thought to occur in the same way as seasonal flu, mainly through coughing or sneezing of infected people. However, at this time, it not known how easily the swine flu virus spreads between people.

### **Should I ask my doctor for a prescription anti-flu drug?**

No. Antiviral drugs are usually used to treat people who are at risk for developing life-threatening complications from the flu. There is no reason to routinely ask for one of these drugs to keep at home, or to take them just as a precaution. Over-use could result in limited supplies for those who need it most. In addition, over-use of antiviral drugs has been known to lead to flu viruses becoming resistant to the drugs. All drugs, including antiviral ones, can cause side effects and should only be used when necessary under the direction of a health care provider.

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

People with H1N1 swine flu infection should be considered potentially contagious as long as they are symptomatic or possibly for up to 7 days following illness onset. Children, especially younger children, might potentially be contagious for longer periods.

### **Is there a vaccine against swine flu?**

There is currently no human vaccine against H1N1 swine flu. It is not known whether the current human flu vaccine provides partial protection against swine flu. CDC has already begun development of a vaccine for swine flu, but this will not be available for months.

### **Can I get tested for H1N1 swine flu?**

The New York State Department of Health has provided guidance to health care providers and hospitals throughout the state regarding who should be tested for swine flu and what specimens to collect. If you are severely ill or worried about your symptoms, contact your health care provider who will determine whether testing is necessary.

### **Can I get swine flu 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.

**Additional information can be found at the following web sites:**

- General influenza information:  
<http://www.nyhealth.gov/diseases/communicable/influenza/>
- CDC Information about swine fl: [http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/general\\_info.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/general_info.htm)