

Updated FAQ on H1N1 Virus (Swine Flu)
From El Dorado county Public Health
(5/3/09)

1. What is Swine Flu (H1N1)?

Swine flu (now being called H1N1 influenza) is a respiratory illness that is normally found in pigs, but can occasionally be found in people. The particular new strain of swine flu that is circulating in the United States right now can be passed from person to person.

2. What are the symptoms of swine flu in humans?

The symptoms of swine flu in most people are similar to the symptoms of regular seasonal flu and include fever, feeling tired or weak, sore throat and coughing. Some people with swine flu also have reported runny nose, upset stomach, vomiting, and diarrhea.

3. What can I do to avoid getting swine flu? How can I protect my family?

Swine flu can be prevented very much like seasonal flu. There are several things you should do to help you and others stay healthy:

- *Wash your hands.*
Washing your hands often will help protect you from germs, and stop the spread of germs. You need to ensure that you wash your hands with soap for at least 20 seconds. Alcohol based hand cleaner also works well.
- *Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.*
Germs often spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose or mouth, which allows the germ to enter your body.
- *Avoid close contact.*
Avoid close contact with people who are sick. When you are sick, keep your distance from others to protect them from getting sick, too.
- *Stay home when you are sick.*
Stay home from work and school when you are sick. You will help prevent others from catching the illness.
- *Cover your mouth and nose.*
Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. It may prevent others around you from getting sick. Another option is to sneeze or cough into your sleeve, rather than your hand.
- *Try to stay in good health.*
Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids and eat healthy foods.

4. How serious is swine flu? Should I be concerned?

Most of the people in our region and in the United States who have had this strain of swine flu have had mild symptoms. However, because this is a new strain and because it is believed to spread fairly easily, health officials are watching cases closely to ensure that there are no changes in the virus and that people do not get sicker. There is cause for concern, but not alarm. We want everyone to use precautions to prevent spread of this virus in the community as they would

with prevention of any flu. Washing your hands frequently, staying home if you are sick, and other good hygiene measures will help prevent swine flu in your community.

5. How does swine flu spread?

This particular strain of swine flu can be passed from person to person through close contact such as coughs and sneezing. People may become infected by touching something with flu viruses on it and then touching their eyes, mouth or nose. Using good hygiene, such as covering your cough, frequently washing your hands and staying home when you are sick, can help prevent the spread of any flu, including swine flu.

6. Are there any cases in El Dorado County?

As of today (Sunday, May 3), El Dorado County has one (1) confirmed and two (2) probable cases. Illness was mild in all of the cases. The three reported cases are among children who attend the same school (Camino School). Camino School will be closed this week through at least Friday, May 8 as a precaution, and all of the children who attend the school complex have been dismissed.

7. My child's school was closed and I am concerned. Why was it closed?

Some communities have closed schools when a case, or cases, of swine flu are found among students or staff. Although this particular strain of flu appears to be similar in many ways right now to seasonal flu, it is still a new virus in our community and we are not sure how it will behave, and how quickly it could spread. If a school in your community is closed, the decision was made by local health and school officials as a precaution to prevent further spread of the flu virus.

If a school is closed, it is important that the students from the school stay home, and limit out of home activities during the closure period. Students should avoid gathering in groups in places such as malls, theaters, or other places where they will have close contact. It is also recommended that they not participate in sports or extra-curricular events until the school is reopened.

8. Why have some schools with cases been closed for longer periods than others in California, and some not closed at all?

The decision to close a school where a case, or cases, of swine flu are found is made based on a number of factors and in consultation with health officials and school personnel. The CDC has provided guidance for communities that a school be closed for at least 7 days and up to 14 days if a confirmed case is found, but the final decision about when to close and for how long is left to local health and school officials.

9. I'm a single mother. If my child's school is closed, what am I supposed to do about their care while I go to work?

If your child's school was closed due to a swine flu case, and you are not able to stay home with him/her, you may want to consider teaming up with another parent whose child attends the same school to share childcare responsibility over the duration of the school closure. The child should not be placed in a daycare setting with other children who have not attended your child's school.

10. My daughter’s elementary school was closed due to a swine flu case and she is home for the week. Can I send her older sibling to his high school?

Unless your teenager has flu-like symptoms, he should be able to go to school and participate in other activities.

11. What should I do if I think I have swine flu?

If you are sick, you should stay home and avoid contact with other people as much as possible so that you don’t spread your illness to other people. So far, most cases of swine flu in the United States are mild. Most people with the flu can be treated at home with over-the-counter medication, rest and extra fluids. But if you have a high fever, severe symptoms or symptoms that persist, you should consult with your healthcare provider.

If you come down with flu-like symptoms and you have an underlying medical condition, like a respiratory condition or immune disorder, contact your healthcare provider.

If you are sick and start experiencing any of the following warning signs, seek emergency medical care.

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. I think my child might have the flu, what do I do?

If your child has only mild symptoms, then simple bed rest, extra fluids and over the counter medication should be all he or she needs. However, if symptoms are severe and you have concerns, or if your child is sick and he/she attends a school that has a known case of swine flu, you should consult with your healthcare provider. Please be sure to keep your child home from school and daycare settings until all symptoms are gone.

13. Should I ask to be tested for swine flu?

Not everyone who has the flu should be tested for swine flu. Your doctor will make that determination based on your symptoms and situation. If your child is sick with flu and attends a school that has a known case of swine flu or if you are sick with flu and have travelled to Mexico within the past seven days, you should tell your doctor.

14. If someone has had swine flu, should they be kept from school or work?

If someone has flu symptoms, they should stay home until they no longer have symptoms. Usually a minimum of 7 days after illness onset is required for an infected person to no longer be contagious; after 7 days most infected people are unlikely to spread infection to anyone else.

15. How do humans catch swine flu?

It appears that this particular strain of Swine flu can pass from person to person through close contact such as cough and sneezing. The virus can also live on surfaces for short periods of time.

16. How common is swine flu infection in humans?

Before this outbreak, CDC received reports of approximately one human swine influenza virus infection every one to two years in the U.S., but from December 2005 through February 2009, 12 cases of human infection with swine influenza have been reported.

17. What is our County doing right now about swine flu?

- Public Health officials are working closely with local hospitals and health care providers to conduct surveillance and control activities. We are also working with other local, state and school officials to keep them informed about the situation.
- Health care providers are being instructed to watch for influenza-like illnesses to detect any new cases.
- As appropriate, healthcare providers are testing individuals for swine flu. If an individual tests positive, communicable disease staff in Public Health are conducting investigations to determine measures that may be needed to prevent further spread of the virus in other people.
- Public Health officials are collaborating with the County Office of Education on issues that impact schools.
- Information and updates are regularly being posted to the County's website.

18. How can human infections with swine influenza be diagnosed?

To diagnose swine influenza A infection, a swab of the nose or throat is collected within the first 4 to 5 days of illness (when an infected person is most likely to be shedding virus). The swab is tested in a special laboratory for the presence of the virus.

19. What medications are available to treat swine (H1N1) flu infections in humans?

There are four different antiviral drugs that are licensed for use in the US for the treatment of influenza. The current swine flu has been found to be susceptible to two (2) of them. If you are diagnosed with swine flu, your healthcare provider will determine the necessity of drug therapy. Anti-viral treatment is not recommended for everyone. For most people, over the counter medications can offer relieve of symptoms.

20. Should I ask for Tamiflu if I have the flu?

Consult with your doctor about that. Tamiflu and other anti-viral drugs have been shown to lessen effects of flu, however it is not being recommended for everyone, particularly if you have only mild symptoms.

21. Is there a vaccine for the swine (H1N1) flu for people?

At this time there is not a vaccine for this strain of the swine flu, **now being called H1N1 flu**. CDC is in the beginning stages of determining if a vaccine will be developed.

22. Will the regular, seasonal flu vaccine protect me?

There may be some cross protection from this year's regular seasonal flu vaccine and the swine flu virus.

Each year, in the regular seasonal flu vaccine there is protection for 3 strains of flu virus. In this year's flu vaccine there was protection for the strain "human influenza A H1N1." Researchers are checking to see if this may offer some protection for the "swine influenza A H1N1" strain, but it is not clear, yet.

In addition, this year's flu vaccine will help protect people from getting the regular, seasonal flu and its symptoms. Because swine flu symptoms are similar to regular, seasonal flu symptoms, people who got this year's flu vaccine will be less likely to get flu-like symptoms that can be mistaken for swine flu.

23. Can I get swine flu from eating pork?

No, you cannot get swine flu from eating properly cooked pork or pork products.

24. Can my pet or animals get swine flu?

According to the American Veterinarian Medical Association, to date, there is no evidence that pets are susceptible to this new strain of influenza; it appears to be transmitted solely from person to person.

25. Is swine flu different from bird flu?

Yes. They are very different viruses.

26. Is this a pandemic?

A pandemic is a worldwide outbreak of disease. This is not a pandemic, but we are monitoring very closely what is happening around the world. The declaration of a pandemic would not significantly change what is currently being done in El Dorado County or California, as surveillance and control measures are already in place.

27. Should I wear a mask?

At this time, it is not necessary to wear a mask in public places or in large groups.

28. Are there any travel restrictions? If so, what are they?

At this time, the CDC recommends that U.S. travelers avoid all non-essential travel to Mexico. Changes to this recommendation can be found at the CDC's website, posted at: <http://www.cdc.gov/travel>.

For more information

- Visit our website at www.edcgov.us/publichealth and click on the What's New link, or
- Visit the CDC website at www.cdc.gov/swineflu
- Call the CDC information line at 1-800-CDC-Info (1-800-232-4636)

- Call the California **Swine Flu Hotline at 1-888-865-0564** (live operators are available 7 AM to 6 PM Monday through Friday, AND 8 AM and 4 PM Saturday and Sunday).