

Swine Influenza: What the Lehman College Community Needs To Know

What is swine influenza? Swine flu is a respiratory infection caused by influenza viruses that regularly cause outbreaks in pigs. There have been reports of serious illness and deaths due to swine flu in Mexico, but the recently confirmed cases in the United States have been mild.

What are the symptoms of swine influenza? Swine flu symptoms appear to be similar to the symptoms of regular human flu and include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, lethargy, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people have reported diarrhea and vomiting associated with swine flu.

How does swine influenza spread? Swine flu viruses can be directly transmitted between pigs and people. Human-to-human transmission is also possible, and appears to be occurring with this outbreak. Spread is mainly through coughing or sneezing. People may become infected by touching something with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth or nose.

Who is at risk for swine influenza? Anyone who has contact with an infected person may be exposed to swine flu. Human transmission is thought to occur in the same way as seasonal flu: through air-carried particles that are released when an infected person coughs or sneezes.

How can I protect myself from swine influenza?

Here are the best ways to avoid getting or spreading swine influenza:

- Cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze.
- 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.
- If you get sick, limit contact with others to avoid infecting them.

These are the same protections as those for seasonal flu and many other respiratory infections.

What should I do if I have flu-like symptoms?

- Anyone experiencing fever, cough or sore throat should stay home from work or school for at least 7 days, and not return until one to two days after the symptoms end.

- You do *not* need to go to the hospital for mild illness, but anyone with severe symptoms, such as difficulty breathing, should seek health care and treatment immediately.

What are the signs of more severe illness with swine flu?

While the current swine influenza cases have been mild so far, infected individuals should still be aware of some of the more severe illness with swine flu. If you become ill and experience any of the following warning signs, seek emergency medical care.

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting

I was in Mexico recently. Does that mean I'm at risk?

Not necessarily, but you should pay close attention to your health for the first 7 days after you return home. If you become sick with a high fever and a cough or sore throat, or you have trouble breathing during this period, see your doctor. When you make the appointment, tell your doctor:

- Your symptoms
- Where you traveled
- If you have had close contact with a sick person or farm animals.

For facts about influenza, and more information about swine flu, please visit the Health Department and CDC websites. Some specific resources:

From New York City Health Department

Facts about flu

<http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/cd/cdinflu.shtml>

From Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

General information about swine flu

http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/general_info.htm

Swine Flu Case Definitions

http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/casedef_swineflu.htm

Swine Flu Infection Control and Patient Care

http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/guidelines_infection_control.htm

Preventing the Flu

<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/habits.htm>