

Fact Sheet: Swine Flu

What is swine influenza?

It is a respiratory illness that occurs in pigs and is caused by Type A influenza swine virus. Swine flu virus does not normally affect humans but in rare cases it can be passed from pigs to humans. The current strain is a new swine influenza virus that is passing from human to human.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms are similar to regular seasonal human influenza and usually appear within 1 to 7 days after being infected and may include:

- Fever (usually greater than 100 F)
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Headache and muscle aches
- Extreme fatigue
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea

Most cases seen in the United States to date are mild but symptoms can be severe enough to require hospitalization. Flu-related complications can occur at any age; however, the elderly, people with chronic health problems, pregnant women and young children are much more likely to develop serious complications after influenza infection.

How is it spread?

Influenza viruses can be directly transmitted from pigs to people and from people to pigs. Human infection with flu viruses from pigs are most likely to occur when people are in close proximity to infected pigs. Human-to-human transmission of swine flu can also occur. This is thought to happen 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 also become infected by touching something with flu viruses on it and then touching their eyes, mouth or nose. You cannot become infected by eating pork or pork products.

What is the treatment?

- Get plenty of rest.
- Drink plenty of fluids to prevent dehydration (i.e. water, juice and tea).
- Take non-aspirin medication for fever and body aches. Aspirin should not be used in children with viral illnesses since there have been cases associated with the development of Reye's Syndrome.
- Swine flu is susceptible to antiviral medications. Consult with your healthcare provider to determine if treatment with antiviral drugs is needed.

How is it prevented?

Prevention measures include:

- Stay home from work or school if you have a respiratory illness.
- Avoid close contact with people who are coughing or otherwise appear ill.
- Cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze by using a tissue or your sleeve/elbow. Dispose of the tissue promptly and carefully.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Wash hands frequently with soap and water. Alcohol based hand gels are also effective.
- Contact your physician or health care provider if you are experiencing severe symptoms including cough, fever, fatigue, sore throat, chills, headaches, body aches possibly along with diarrhea and vomiting.
- According to the CDC, the seasonal flu vaccine is unlikely to provide protection against the swine flu.

This fact sheet is for information only and is not meant to be used for self-diagnosis or as a substitute for consultation with a health care provider. For more information call your health care provider or call Monroe County Health Department at 734-240-7800.