

Swine Flu

Frequently Asked Questions (For Cedars-Sinai Staff)

Updated: April 28, 2009

What are the early 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 and fatigue. Some people have reported diarrhea and vomiting associated with swine flu.

How is swine flu spread?

Spread of this swine flu virus is thought to be happening in the same way that seasonal flu spreads. Flu viruses are spread mainly from person to person through coughing or sneezing of people with influenza. Sometimes people may become infected by touching something with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth or nose.

I'm sneezing and I feel tired. Do I have the flu?

Flu symptoms are generally more severe than sneezing and a feeling of fatigue. If you have not recently traveled to any of the affected areas, or been in contact with anyone who has, you may simply be suffering from allergies or a cold. Typically, the incubation period is 48 hours. If the symptoms worsen within the next day or two, please let your manager/supervisor know.

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

Let your manager/supervisor know if:

- You are suffering flu-like symptoms **and** have recently traveled to Mexico or any other affected areas (as of April 28, those included San Diego, Imperial, and Sacramento counties in California; the states of New York, Ohio, Kansas and Texas; and New Zealand, Spain, Israel, United Kingdom and Canada).
- You are suffering flu-like symptoms **and** have been around someone who recently visited Mexico or any other affected areas.

You will then be referred to Employee Health Services during the hours of 7 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday through Friday. After hours, you will be directed to the Emergency Department for evaluation.

If you are not at work and need medical attention:

- Contact your physician or healthcare provider before traveling to see them and report your symptoms. Explain why you think you have swine flu (for example, if you have recently traveled to a country where there is a swine flu outbreak in humans). Follow the advice given to you for care.
- If it is not possible to contact your healthcare provider in advance, communicate your suspicion of having swine flu immediately upon arrival at the healthcare facility.
- Take care to cover your nose and mouth during travel.

My co-worker is coughing. Should I send them to Employee Health Services?

You can advise your co-worker of the symptoms by showing them this FAQ. You should also let your manager/supervisor know.

I recently visited Mexico (or San Diego County or another location hit by the swine flu outbreak), but I don't have any flu-like symptoms. What should I do?

There is nothing to worry about unless you are exhibiting flu-like symptoms. Continue paying very close attention to practicing good hand hygiene as well as covering up coughs and sneezes.

I've been in contact with someone who was recently in an area that has a swine flu outbreak. What should I do?

There is nothing to worry about unless that person display or develops flu-like symptoms. You may not have contracted the virus, and you should only be concerned if you start having flu-like symptoms. Continue practicing good hand hygiene.

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

People infected with the swine flu virus should be considered potentially contagious as long as they have flu-like symptoms, possibly up to seven days following the onset of the illness.

I'm currently well, but I'm worried about getting the swine flu. What can I do to protect myself?

To protect yourself, practice general preventive measures for influenza:

- Avoid close contact with people who appear unwell and who have fever and a cough.
- Wash your hands with soap and water or an alcohol rub frequently and thoroughly.
- Practice good health habits including adequate sleep, eating nutritious food and keeping physically active.

Why have the cases in Mexico been more serious than those in the United States and other countries?

The World Health Organization and U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) are still investigating why some of the cases of swine flu have been more serious in Mexico.

Is there a human vaccine to protect from swine influenza?

There are no vaccines that contain the current swine influenza virus causing illness in humans. It is not known whether current human seasonal influenza vaccines can provide any protection.

What is the treatment for swine flu in humans?

The treatment for swine flu varies depending on the severity of the individual's illness. In the cases to date in the United States, the illness has been mild and self-limited, and the majority of patients have recovered without need for hospitalization or antiviral medicines. In more severe cases, certain antiviral medicines may be needed.