



DALLAS COUNTY
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

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Director

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4/26/2009

To: Parents of students attending Dallas County Schools
Re: Swine Flu Outbreak
Priority: Urgent

Current information:

1. Dallas County has 3 probable cases of swine influenza infections in separate locations of the County.
2. Swine flu infections are occurring in Central and Northern Mexico with reports of severe illness and deaths.
3. Cases of swine flu have been confirmed in the San Antonio area as well as California, Kansas, Ohio, and New York State.
4. Byron Steele High School in Cibolo, Texas has been closed as a result of the swine flu infections in the San Antonio area.
5. The World Health Organization (WHO) has declared a public health emergency.
6. The United States Department of Homeland Security has declared a public health emergency.
7. Dallas County Health and Human Services (DCHHS) is engaged in intense surveillance and investigation activities to detect cases locally.

This situation has the potential to rapidly escalate and particularly has implications for school-age students and schools. At this time, we are recommending the following actions:

1. Do not let your child to attend school if he/she has symptoms of the flu, particularly fever. Your school should make necessary arrangements to help your child make-up for any missed school days.
2. If anyone in your home is sick with symptoms of the flu, be sure that they receive medical care as you would during a typical flu illness.
3. Persons diagnosed with swine influenza infections are instructed to stay at home for 7 days after the start of illness and fever is gone.
4. Wash your hands after being around a sick child, and keep sick children separated from healthy members of the family. Encourage everyone to cover their mouths and noses when coughing or sneezing.

For additional information, contact the Centers for Disease Control at 1-800-CDC-INFO, or online at: <http://www.cdc.gov>.

Sincerely,

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SWINE INFLUENZA (PIG FLU)

Swine Flu & You Information for People Living in Texas

What is swine flu?

Swine Influenza (swine flu) is a respiratory disease of pigs caused by type A influenza viruses. 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.

Are humans infected with swine flu in Texas?

In late March and early April 2009, cases of swine flu were first reported in Southern California and near San Antonio, Texas. At this time, human cases of swine flu infection have been reported in Texas. CDC and local and state health agencies are working together to investigate this situation.

Is this swine flu virus contagious?

CDC has determined that this virus is contagious and is spreading from human to human. However, at this time, it not known how easily the virus spreads between people.

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, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people have reported diarrhea and vomiting associated with swine flu. In the past, severe illness (pneumonia and respiratory failure) and deaths have been reported with swine flu infection in people. Like seasonal flu, swine flu may cause a worsening of underlying chronic medical conditions.

How serious is swine flu infection?

Like seasonal flu, swine flu in humans can vary in severity from mild to severe. Between 2005 until January 2009, 12 human cases of swine flu were detected in the U.S. with no deaths occurring. However, swine flu infection can be serious. In September 1988, a previously healthy 32-year-old pregnant woman in Wisconsin was hospitalized for pneumonia after being infected with swine flu and died 8 days later. A swine flu outbreak in Fort Dix, New Jersey occurred in 1976 that caused more than 200 cases with serious illness in several people and one death.

How do you catch swine flu?

Spread of swine flu can occur in two ways:

- Through contact with infected pigs or environments contaminated with swine flu viruses.
- Through contact with a person with swine flu. Human-to-human spread of swine flu has been documented also and is thought to occur in the same way as seasonal flu. Influenza is thought to spread mainly person-to-person through coughing or sneezing of infected people.

Are there medicines to treat swine flu?

Yes. CDC recommends the use of oseltamivir or zanamivir for the treatment and/or prevention of infection with these swine influenza viruses. Antiviral drugs are prescription medicines (pills, liquid or an inhaler) that fight against the flu by keeping flu viruses from reproducing in your body. If you get sick, antiviral drugs can make your illness milder and make you feel better faster. They may also prevent serious flu complications. For treatment, antiviral drugs work best if started soon after getting sick (within 2 days of symptoms).

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

People with swine influenza virus infection should be considered potentially contagious as long as they are symptomatic and possible for up to 7 days following illness onset. Children, especially younger children, might potentially be contagious for longer periods.

What can I do to protect myself from getting sick?

There is no vaccine available right now to protect against swine flu. 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.
- 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. Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.

What should I do if I get sick?

If you live in [XX] and become ill with influenza-like symptoms, including fever, body aches, runny nose, sore throat, nausea, or vomiting or diarrhea, you may want to contact their health care provider, particularly if you are worried about your symptoms. 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.

If you become ill and experience 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

Can I get swine influenza 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.

More information on swine flu can be found at www.cdc.gov/flu/swine, or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.

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CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION
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