

# SWINE FLU FACT SHEET

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- There are no cases of swine flu in New Jersey at this time, although the Department continues to investigate reports of illness.
- A total of 20 cases of swine influenza infection in humans have been confirmed in 5 U.S. states by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). (NY, CA, TX, KS, OH)
- Investigations are ongoing to determine the source of the infections and whether additional people have been infected with swine influenza viruses.
- CDC is working very closely with officials in states where human cases of swine influenza A (H1N1) have been identified, as well as with health officials in Mexico, Canada and the World Health Organization. This includes sending staff to affected areas in the US and internationally to provide guidance and technical support. The CDC has activated its Emergency Operations Center to coordinate this investigation.

## SWINE FLU

### **What is swine flu?**

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 is possible for swine flu viruses to spread from person to person also.

### **Is this swine flu contagious?**

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

### **What are the 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
- Fatigue (tiredness)

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 other chronic medical conditions to become worse.

### **How serious is swine flu infection?**

Like seasonal flu, swine flu in humans can vary in severity from mild to severe.

### **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 medications 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 inhalers) 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 symptom onset).

### **What can I do to prevent 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 can cause respiratory illnesses like influenza. Things you can do to prevent the spread of respiratory illnesses include:

- Covering your nose and mouth with a tissue or your shirt sleeve 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 sanitizers are also effective. Make sure that it is at least 60% alcohol.
- 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.

### **If I had a flu shot for this past flu season, will it protect me?**

No, the swine flu is a new virus and was not included in the 2008-2009 seasonal flu vaccine. It is not likely the 2008-2009 seasonal flu vaccine provides any cross protection against infection with swine flu. However, the Department does recommend that persons receive the flu shot annually to protect against seasonal influenza.

### **What should I do if I get sick?**

If you become ill with influenza-like symptoms, including fever, body aches, runny nose, sore throat, nausea, or vomiting, or diarrhea, contact your health care provider, especially 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.

**What are some signs that emergency medical attention is needed?**

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 flu from eating or preparing pork?**

No. Swine flu viruses are not spread by food. You cannot get swine flu from eating pork or pork products. Eating properly handled and cooked pork products is safe.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION RESOURCES**

Where can I learn more?

The CDC website will be providing daily updates regarding the status of the swine flu investigation in the US. They also have information posted such as questions and answers regarding swine flu. The web address is [www.cdc.gov/swineflu](http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu).