

Frequently Asked Questions Swine Flu

Updated: April 30, 2009

Q: What are the symptoms of swine flu?

A: The symptoms of swine flu in people are expected to be similar to the symptoms of regular human seasonal influenza and include fever, lethargy, lack of appetite and coughing. Some people with swine flu also have reported runny nose, sore throat, nausea, vomiting and diarrhea. People may become infected by touching something with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth or nose.

Q: What are preventative measures to combat swine flu?

A: Avoid close contact with people who are sick. Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. Wash your hands often with hot water and soap. Keep your hands away from your eyes, nose or mouth. Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids, and eat nutritious food. If you are sick, stay home to help prevent others from catching your illness.

Q: How do you treat swine flu?

A: The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention currently recommends Tamiflu (oseltamivir) and Relenza (zanamivir) to treat and prevent swine flu infections. These antivirals, which are prescription medicines, should be taken as soon as possible after symptoms appear.

Q: Are there travel restrictions because of the flu?

A: The World Health Organization and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention advises no restriction of regular travel or closure of borders. It is considered prudent for people who are ill to delay international travel and for people developing symptoms following international travel to seek medical attention, in line with guidance from national authorities.

Q: Can I get infected from eating pork products like bacon or ham?

A: There is also no risk of infection from this virus from consumption of well-cooked pork and pork products.

Q: What is a pandemic alert?

A: A public health warning system developed by the WHO. This system consists of six phases, with Phase 1 having the lowest risk of human cases and Phase 6 posing the greatest risk of pandemic.

The world is presently in Phase 5 of the Pandemic Alert. This means that there is a new influenza virus subtype causing disease in humans, and that it is spreading easily from human to human in communities.

Q: Should I be concerned about this virus?

A: You can be comforted in knowing that the world is better prepared for an influenza pandemic than at any time in history. The preparedness measures undertaken because of the threat from previous avian flu outbreaks are helping governments and health organizations effectively respond to this event. Most importantly, you should not panic but prepare for the possibility of swine flu in your community.

Q: What should United Ways do to prepare for the swine flu?

A: Review your organization's emergency and business continuity plans should local, state or federal governments take steps to close public events and restrict movement in your community. As part of your preparation, consider updating emergency contact information, providing staff with the UWA Link Line number and reviewing the contents of your emergency supplies kit.

Q: How can United Ways assist communities prepare for a potential pandemic?

A: There are many ways to help your community. Some ideas are listed below:

Support the 2-1-1 system in your community. The telephone line, 2-1-1, provides accurate and up-to-date information about existing community resources. During a crisis 2-1-1 provides critical information to the public. 2-1-1 centers in multiple states are already answering calls about swine flu and coordinating with local health and emergency operation authorities.

In preparation of the spread of flu, bring together local service organizations to develop a plan that identifies the types of assistance and resources that might be needed and can be provided by various entities. Local United Ways in some communities are already working with various organizations to make sure all populations are educated about the swine flu.

Coordinate with partners and local emergency officials to ensure a workable pandemic plan is in place for your community.

Actively educate the public, volunteers and partners about preventative measures – including the importance of frequent hand washing and covering your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing.

Q: Where can I get additional information about swine flu?

A: HHS Secretary Sebelius and DHS Secretary Napolitano have posted a Webcast to answer questions regarding the swine flu. You can watch the archived webcast at www.hhs.gov.