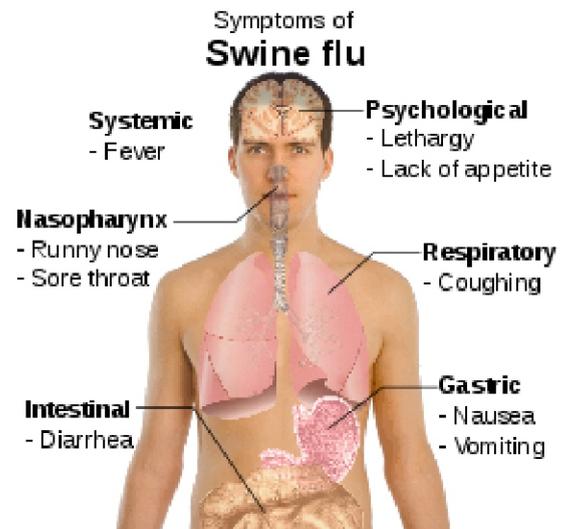


## Swine Flu Update : April 30, 2009

Swine influenza (also swine flu) refers to influenza caused by any strain of the influenza virus endemic in pigs (swine). Strains endemic in swine are called swine influenza virus (SIV). Of the three genera of human flu, two are endemic also in swine: Influenzavirus A is common and Influenzavirus C is rare. Influenzavirus B has not been reported in swine. Within Influenzavirus A and Influenzavirus C, the strains endemic to swine and humans are largely distinct. Swine flu is common in swine and rare in humans. People who work with swine, especially people with intense exposures, are at risk of catching swine influenza if the swine carry a strain able to infect humans. However, these strains infrequently circulate between humans as SIV rarely mutates into a form able to pass easily from human to human. In humans, the symptoms of swine flu are similar to those of influenza and of influenza-like illness in general, namely chills, fever, sore throat, muscle pains, severe headache, coughing, weakness and general discomfort. The 2009 flu outbreak in humans is due to a new strain of influenza A virus subtype H1N1 that derives in part from human influenza, avian influenza, and two separate strains of swine influenza. The origins of this new strain are unknown, and the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) reports that it has not been isolated in swine. It passes with apparent ease from human to human, an ability attributed to an as-yet unidentified mutation. The strain in most cases causes only mild symptoms and the infected person makes a full recovery without requiring medical attention and without the use of antiviral medicines.

### Signs & Symptoms of Swine Flu

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), in humans the symptoms of swine flu are similar to those of influenza and of influenza-like illness in general. Symptoms include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. The 2009 outbreak has shown an increased percentage of patients reporting diarrhea and vomiting.



Because these symptoms are not specific to swine flu, a differential diagnosis of probable swine flu requires not only symptoms but also a high likelihood of swine flu due to the person's recent history. For example, during the 2009 swine flu outbreak in the United States, CDC advised physicians to "consider swine influenza infection in the differential diagnosis of patients with acute febrile respiratory illness who have either been in contact with persons with confirmed swine flu, or who were in one of the five U.S. states that have reported swine flu cases or in Mexico during the 7 days preceding their illness onset." [22] A diagnosis of confirmed swine flu requires laboratory testing of a respiratory sample (a simple nose and throat swab).

## Prevention of spread in humans

Influenza spreads between humans through coughing or sneezing and people touching something with the virus on it and then touching their own nose or mouth. Swine flu cannot be spread by pork products, since the virus is not transmitted through food. The swine flu in humans is most contagious during the first five days of the illness although some people, most commonly children, can remain contagious for up to ten days. Diagnosis can be made by sending a specimen, collected during the first five days, to the CDC for analysis.

**Recommendations to prevent spread of the virus among humans include using standard infection control against influenza. This includes frequent washing of hands with soap and water or with alcohol-based hand sanitizers,** especially after being out in public. Although the current trivalent influenza vaccine is unlikely to provide protection against the new 2009 H1N1 strain,[30] vaccines against the new strain are being developed and could be ready as early as June 2009.

Experts agree that hand-washing can help prevent viral infections, including ordinary influenza and **the new swine flu virus. Influenza can spread in coughs or sneezes, but an increasing body of evidence shows little particles of virus can linger on tabletops, telephones and other surfaces and be transferred via the fingers to the mouth, nose or eyes. Alcohol-based gel or foam hand sanitizers work well to destroy viruses and bacteria.** Anyone with flu-like symptoms such as a sudden fever, cough or muscle aches should stay away from work or public transportation and should see a doctor to be tested.

Social distancing is another tactic. It means staying away from other people who might be infected and can include avoiding large gatherings, spreading out a little at work, or perhaps staying home and lying low if an infection is spreading in a community.

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