



H1N1 INFLUENZA (SWINE FLU)

What is Swine Flu?

Swine Flu (H1N1 Influenza) is an infection caused by a new influenza virus that was first detected in the United States in April 2009. Since then, the virus has spread rapidly around the world through person-to-person contact, and the World Health Organization (WHO) declared a pandemic of influenza in June 2009. It is sometimes called “swine flu” because the virus includes genes from flu viruses that normally circulate in pigs.

How does Swine Flu spread?

The Swine Flu virus is spread in the same way as other influenza viruses, and is transmitted from person to person via coughing, sneezing, and breathing. It can also be transmitted through touching something that is contaminated by the virus, such as an object or a surface. There is no risk of catching swine flu by eating pork.

Who is at risk?

Anyone can get influenza, but the severity of the illness and the risk of complications can vary significantly between people. Some develop only a mild illness, but others can become severely unwell, or even die from the infection. Those at particularly high risk of having a severe illness include people over the age of 65, children under the age of 5, pregnant women, those with chronic medical problems (including diabetes, heart disease, chronic lung disease, asthma, kidney disease, obesity), and those with a poor immune system (such as people with HIV or cancer).

What are the symptoms?

The most common symptoms are fever, chills, cough, sore throat, runny nose, headaches, body aches, and tiredness. Some people also have vomiting and diarrhoea. Most people will recover completely, but others might need hospitalization for complications such as pneumonia, and many deaths from swine flu have occurred around the world.

How can the risk of Swine Flu be reduced?

1. Vaccination

A swine flu vaccine (Panvax) is now available, and is free of charge for everyone over 6 months of age. The 2010 seasonal flu vaccine also protects against swine flu, as well as two other strains of influenza viruses. This vaccine is free for certain high-risk groups.

2. Personal hygiene

- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water, or use an alcohol based hand gel
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, and dispose of your tissue promptly after a single use.
- Ensure that you wash your hands after coughing or sneezing.
- Make sure that your children follow the same advice.
- Keep hard surfaces such as door handles and work surfaces clean.

How is Swine Flu treated?

Most people will recover from swine flu without any specific treatment from a doctor. You should rest and drink plenty of fluids. Paracetamol will help with your fever, headaches, and body aches. Other over-the-counter medications that can be helpful include decongestants and cough suppressants. If you are very unwell, or belong to one of the high-risk groups mentioned above, you should see your doctor. Some people will require treatment with antivirals such as **Tamiflu**, and some might even require hospital treatment if they are severely unwell.

For up to date information on swine flu around the world, visit the following websites:

www.healthemergency.gov.au

<http://www.who.int/csr/disease/swineflu/en/index.html>

<http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/>