

Guidelines for Recognizing Influenza (Flu) Symptoms and Management



Signs and Symptoms of Influenza (Flu)

Infection with the influenza virus typically causes:

- fever (temperature >100° F)
- cough
- sore throat
- tiredness
- headache
- muscle aches.

People infected with the current strain of the the swine influenza virus (H1N1), avian influenza virus (H5N1), or with a new human pandemic influenza strain may show typical human influenza-like symptoms such as those listed above, but some will have more serious symptoms such as pneumonia, severe respiratory diseases, and other life-threatening complications. Certain groups (such as persons with diabetes, heart disease, asthma, or emphysema, and pregnant women) may be more likely to develop severe illness.

Other Facts about Influenza Infection



The influenza virus is spread by the tiny droplets expelled when an infected person coughs or sneezes. These respiratory droplets do not usually remain airborne as they are heavy enough to quickly fall out of the air; however, they can spread approximately 3-6 feet from the infected individual. Infection can result from breathing in these droplets before they fall or by touching a surface on which the droplets landed (such as a doorknob or computer keyboard) and then touching the mucous membranes of the mouth, nose, or eyes. Depending on conditions, the virus may live for 1-2 days on hard surfaces.

A person infected with influenza can spread the virus in their respiratory droplets for about 24 hours before they begin to feel ill and will continue to expel the virus in respiratory secretions for about 7 days after they develop symptoms (children may spread the virus for up to 10 days after the start of illness).

How to Limit the Spread of Infection

- Stay healthy – eat, rest, drink plenty of fluids, exercise, and get vaccinated yearly against seasonal flu
- Wash your hands frequently or use alcohol-based hand sanitizing gel
- Clean hard surfaces such as doorknobs and telephones with disinfecting wipes
- Cover your nose and mouth with the inside of your elbow or a tissue when you cough or sneeze and encourage others to do the same





- Put used tissues in the trash
- Stay home from work if you are ill, and keep your children home from school if they are ill
- Practice social distancing (for example, work from home, bank on the internet, or avoid unnecessary travel)
- Be prepared if you are asked to voluntarily remain at home – have an emergency supply kit for your home including water, food, and medications (both basic non-prescription medications like ibuprofen and at least a 2 week supply of prescription medications.)

What to Do if You Are Ill

A fever may indicate infection with influenza. Have a thermometer at home and know how to use it properly.

- Place the thermometer bulb under the tongue for at least two minutes
- Wait more than 10 minutes after eating or drinking before taking your temperature
- A temperature 100° F or higher indicates a fever

If you have a fever and have recently traveled to a country or state where avian or swine influenza is present, or if you have been in contact with someone who has, you should contact your doctor immediately and avoid contact with other persons to whom you could spread infection. Before you arrive, call your doctor's office to let them know that you are concerned about influenza infection. Putting on a surgical-type mask may be helpful to decrease the chance of spreading infectious respiratory droplets.

If you have not recently traveled or been in contact with anyone who has, you may still wish to see your doctor for seasonal influenza treatment or to exclude other illnesses (including leptospirosis or dengue fever). In general, healthy persons with seasonal flu may remain at home and care for themselves as described in the next section.

If the pandemic phase increases, meaning there is human-to-human transmission of a pandemic influenza virus, persons with fever should follow the directions issued by HDOH to obtain treatment from the appropriate hospital, clinic, or alternate health care facility.

Caring for a Person Infected with Influenza at Home

The ill person should:

- Avoid contact with healthy family members
- If possible, stay in a separate room with the door closed
- If possible, use a separate bathroom that is cleaned daily with household disinfectant
- Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue and dispose of the tissue in the trash
- Wear a surgical-type mask, if available
- Not go out to go to work, school, the store, or anywhere else
- Drink plenty of fluids and eat a healthy diet as possible
- Get plenty of rest



- Take over the counter medications (e.g. to treat fever, congestion, cough) as needed to support you through the illness
- Children (18 years and under) should **NOT** take aspirin or aspirin-containing products (e.g. bismuth subsalicylate – Pepto Bismol) if influenza is suspected because of the risk of Reye syndrome, a rare but serious complication. For children, other medications such as acetaminophen (e.g. Tylenol) or ibuprofen (e.g. Advil or Motrin) may be used for relief of fever.

Other people in the house should:

- Discourage visitors
- If possible, have only one adult in the home care for sick persons. Because this adult may be at higher risk of becoming infected and may spread the virus to others even before feeling ill, he or she should wear a surgical mask when leaving the house.
- Avoid having pregnant women care for the sick person
- Try to stay away from the ill person, or stay 6 or more feet away
- Wash their hands with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand gel frequently, including after every contact with a sick person or the person's room or bathroom.
- Encourage the ill person to drink plenty of fluids and a nourishing diet and get plenty of rest.
- Not use the ill person's plates, silverware, towel, or toothbrush
- Wash the ill person's sheets and clothing with detergent and tumble dry on high heat
- Wash any other items touched by the ill person with soap and water or clean with disinfectant wipes
- Monitor the ill person for signs of potential need for specialized health care at an appropriate facility. Such signs may include:
 - Shortness of breath or increasing difficulty breathing
 - Persistently high fever (temperature greater than 102° F) despite taking appropriate medications (e.g. acetaminophen [e.g. Tylenol] or ibuprofen [e.g. Advil or Motrin])
 - Mental confusion
 - Lethargy (i.e., not alert or responding to normal stimuli)
- If the ill person shows signs of worsening or if uncertain, contact your primary care physician and/or public health authorities (contact information will be made available during a pandemic)

Stay at home when they have a fever and during the time that are most likely to spread the infection to others (7 days after the start of illness for adults, and 10 days after the start of illness for children).

HOW THE VIRUS IS SPREAD

The influenza virus is spread by the droplets expelled when an infected person coughs or sneezes

An infected person is contagious 24 hours before symptoms appear and up to 7 days after they appear.

The droplets do not stay airborne but can spread from 3 to 6 feet

A person becomes infected:

By breathing in virus droplets

By touching the surface infected by droplets and then touching their mouth, nose or eyes.

The droplets that land on a hard surface can remain contagious for 1 to 2 days.



1 Wet hands.



2 Apply soap to hands.



3 Scrub front and back of hands and between fingers for at least 20 seconds.

KILL GERMS IN JUST 20 SECONDS

Hand-washing lessens one's chances of getting sick and spreading germs. Many viruses spread easily from person to person. Here are the basic steps to help you avoid getting sick:



6 Dry hands thoroughly with paper towel.



5 Turn off water lever with a paper towel.



4 Rinse hands for 10 seconds.

PROTECTING YOURSELF

- Stay healthy – eat, rest, drink plenty of fluids, exercise and get vaccinated yearly against seasonal flu

- Wash your hands frequently or use alcohol-based hand sanitizing gel

- Clean hard surfaces such as doorknobs and telephones with disinfecting wipes

- Cover your nose and mouth with the inside of your elbow or a tissue when you cough or sneeze and encourage others to do the same

- Put used tissues in the trash

- Stay home from work if you are ill, and keep your children home from school if they are ill

- Practice social distancing (for example, work from home, bank on the Internet, or avoid unnecessary travel)

- Be prepared if you are asked to voluntarily remain at home – have an emergency supply kit for your home including water, food, and medications (both basic nonprescription medications like ibuprofen and at least a 2-week supply of prescription medications)

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, state Department of Health

The Honolulu Advertiser; Gannett News Service



Swine-Origin Influenza: Frequently Asked Questions

What is swine flu?

Swine influenza (swine flu) is caused by type A influenza viruses that cause regular infection outbreaks among pigs. People do not normally get swine flu, but human infections can and do happen. Swine flu viruses have been reported to spread from person-to-person but usually not more than a chain of three people.

Are there human infections with swine flu in the United States?

In late March and early April 2009, cases of human infection with a new swine influenza virus (swine-origin flu) were first reported in California and Texas. Around the same time, cases were being reported in Mexico. Other U.S. states have reported cases of swine-origin flu infection in humans, and cases have been reported internationally as well.

For the most updated case count of laboratory confirmed swine flu infections in the United States, visit the CDC website, <http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/>.

Is there swine-origin flu in Hawai'i?

No swine-origin flu cases have been reported yet in Hawai'i. The Hawai'i Department of Health is working hard to keep this swine-origin flu from spreading to Hawai'i by screening passengers arriving at airports, investigating and testing people with illnesses who have recently traveled to affected areas, giving the latest information to doctors, making sure an extra supply of flu-specific medicines is available for our state, and by helping people learn what they can do to stay healthy.

Is this swine-origin flu virus contagious?

Yes, this swine-origin flu virus seems able to spread from person-to-person, like regular human influenza viruses. However, you can protect yourself from getting sick by avoiding contact with sick people and washing your hands often.

What are the signs and symptoms of swine-origin flu in people?

The symptoms of this swine-origin flu in people are similar to the symptoms of regular human flu and include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and tiredness. Some people with this new infection have also had diarrhea and vomiting. As with the seasonal flu that occurs every year, severe illnesses and even deaths can occur, especially in persons with some medical condition and in the young or old.

How does swine-origin flu spread?

This swine-origin flu virus appears to be spread the same way as our regular seasonal flu viruses. Flu viruses are spread from person-to-person through coughing or sneezing or by touching infected droplets. People may also become infected by touching something with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth, nose, or eyes.

How long is a person with swine-origin flu contagious?

An adult with swine-origin flu may be contagious to others from a day before they get sick until 7 days after becoming sick. Children may be contagious for 10 days after getting sick with swine-origin flu.

Are there medicines to treat swine-origin flu?

Medicines such as acetaminophen (e.g. Tylenol) and ibuprofen (e.g. Motrin, Advil) can help make people with flu feel better. If you have a medical condition such as liver, stomach, or kidney problems or take certain medicines (such as blood thinners like coumadin) you should talk with your doctor before using these medicines. Antiviral medications are available to treat swine-origin flu, but most illnesses seen in the United States have so far been mild and not everyone may need to be treated with these antiviral medicines. It will be important to use these medicines to treat hospitalized patients and patients who may be at risk for more severe illness because of their age or health conditions. Your doctor will be able to help decide if you should take these medicines.

Is there a vaccine against swine-origin flu?

Scientists are working on making a vaccine for this swine-origin flu, but it may not be ready for several months. In the meantime you can protect yourself by avoiding contact with sick people and washing your hands frequently.

What can I do to protect myself from getting sick?

Protect yourself and others from diseases like flu by taking these simple steps:

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your sleeve or the inside of your upper arm or elbow, away from your hands.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- If you get sick, stay home from work or school and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them.
- Get plenty of sleep, exercise, and eat healthy foods.

Is it safe for children to attend school?

Right now children should attend school if they are healthy. Children who are sick with a fever and cough or sore throat should stay home from school until they have recovered. If cases of this swine-origin flu are seen in Hawai'i, the

Department of Education may decide, based on the Department of Health recommendations, to close schools for a time until no more cases are seen.

Is it safe for adults to go to work?

Right now you should not be at risk for swine-origin flu at work. If cases of swine-origin flu are seen in Hawai'i, your employer may have plans for you to change your work schedule. If you become sick, especially with a fever with cough or sore throat, you should stay home from work until you have recovered. If your doctor suspects that you may have swine-origin flu you will be asked to stay home for at least 7 days.

What should I do if I get sick?

If you become ill with flu-like symptoms, such as fever, body aches, runny nose, sore throat, nausea, or vomiting or diarrhea, you should contact your doctor. Your doctor will help decide if you need flu testing or treatment. Call your doctor's office before you arrive, and let them know you are worried about having flu and why. They may give you a mask to wear and have you avoid the waiting room.

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.

You should seek immediate medical care or call 911 if you have any of the following:

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Not waking up or not interacting
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting

What should I do to prepare for an outbreak of swine-origin flu in Hawai'i?

If there is a reported case of this swine-origin flu in Hawai'i, efforts will be made to contain the spread of this infection. Such efforts may include closing schools and encouraging people to stay at home. Each home should be prepared with an emergency preparedness kit that contains at least 3 days supply of water, food, a can opener, clothes, flashlight, hygiene items, basic first aid supplies, and a radio. You should make sure that all members of your family keep at least a 2 week supply of any necessary medicines in the house. You should make plans for childcare at home if schools are closed.

Can I get swine influenza, including this new swine-origin flu, from eating or preparing pork?

No. Swine influenza viruses, including this new swine-origin flu, 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.