



Special points to remember:

- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (the CDC) is continuing to study the current strain of swine flu. But they are taking it very seriously!
- Handwashing remains the most effective method of protecting you and your clients from the spread of germs—including the swine flu virus.

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This year's seasonal flu vaccine DOES NOT protect against the swine flu.

A Swine Flu Fact Sheet

Just for You from In the Know!

WHAT IN THE WORLD IS SWINE FLU?

You may have heard that the United States government has declared a “state of emergency” because of an outbreak of the swine flu. So what is swine flu all about and why is it a public health emergency?

Swine flu is a virus that originates in pigs. It causes them to have respiratory symptoms similar to when a person gets the flu. Normally, the virus spreads from pig to pig, but NOT to humans. In the past, there were rare cases of people “catching” swine flu, but, in most of these cases, the people had contact with sick pigs.

The current virus is different. Scientists believe the germ is a mixture of swine flu, bird flu and human flu—and it is spreading between people, whether or not they had contact with pigs.

The swine flu has killed more than 80 people in Mexico and has infected at least 20 people in the United States. While the seasonal flu is most dangerous for infants and the elderly, most of the swine flu deaths from have been among healthy adults. The CDC considers this worrisome because the last big flu epidemic (which killed at least 40 million people worldwide in 1918) also first struck otherwise healthy young adults.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF SWINE FLU?

The symptoms of the swine flu are similar to the symptoms of the human flu, including:

- Fever
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Body aches
- Headache

- Chills
- Fatigue

In addition, some people have reported nausea, vomiting and diarrhea as part of the swine flu. Serious cases of the disease can also lead to pneumonia and respiratory failure.

And, just like with seasonal flu, people who suffer from swine flu may notice a worsening of any preexisting chronic illnesses or medical conditions.



HOW IS SWINE FLU SPREAD?

- The CDC has determined that the current swine flu IS contagious—which means that it can be spread from person to person.
- So far, it seems that the swine flu is spreading the same way that the seasonal flu does—mainly through droplets that float through the air when infected people cough or sneeze.
- Some viruses can live for several hours on surfaces like tables, doorknobs and telephones. This may be true for the swine flu, so some people may be getting sick by touching something contaminated by the swine flu virus—and then touching their eyes, noses or mouths.
- It is possible for an infected person to spread the virus to others beginning 24 hours BEFORE symptoms show up. This means that you may have contact with an infected person who seems perfectly healthy. And, it means that you could spread the virus before you know you have it.
- People who are infected with the swine flu remain contagious for at least a week after they become sick.
- People who have recently traveled to a high-risk area, such as Mexico, should be especially watchful for any flu-like symptoms. If they notice any signs of the flu, they should see a physician to confirm the diagnosis.
- It's important to pay attention to ongoing reports about the swine flu. Viruses are smart little germs and can “mutate” or change as time goes on. If this happens, the virus may become more—or less—dangerous. So far, the CDC has been unable to predict how the swine flu might change.

The swine flu virus is NOT spread through food. People cannot become infected with swine flu by eating pork or pork products.

PREVENTION & TREATMENT OF THE SWINE FLU

Currently, there is no vaccine available that protects against the swine flu. However, there are some basic health habits that help prevent the spread of germs. These include:

- **Covering your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.** Then, dispose of the tissue in the trash.
- **Trying to minimize close contact with people who may have the flu.** Wear gloves, a mask and other personal protective equipment during client care, if necessary.
- **Avoiding touching your eyes, nose or mouth while you are at work.**
- **Washing your hands!!** This is the number one way to protect your health—and the health of your clients. Follow your workplace policy for how and when to wash your hands. Waterless (alcohol-based) hand cleaners are also effective against the swine flu virus.



When it comes to infection control, there is no substitute for washing your hands! It is the best way to protect your body from infectious bacteria and viruses!

The CDC is already hard at work, trying to create a vaccine against the swine flu. However, this process takes months. In the meantime, there are some drugs (called anti-virals) that seem to work against swine flu. These include Tamiflu and Relenza. But, keep in mind, many people recover from the swine flu *without* treatment—just like with the seasonal flu.