

CARING FOR SOMEONE WITH THE FLU

While some require hospitalization, most people with flu are able to stay at home and can be cared for by family or friends who live in the household.

♦ **Designate one person as caregiver:** this person should not have any serious medical conditions that may increase the risk of severe complications if they also became ill with flu:

High risk conditions include

- ♦ pregnancy ♦ diabetes
 - ♦ heart problems ♦ kidney disease
 - ♦ weak immune system
 - ♦ chronic lung disease like asthma, emphysema, tuberculosis, etc.
 - ♦ over age 65
- ♦ **Separate ill persons from others** - as much as possible, the ill person should stay in a separate room, cover coughs and sneezes (cough into your elbow, not hands!)
- ♦ **Wear face masks** - they will decrease nose and mouth exposure to viruses if worn by a caregiver who is within three feet of the sick person.
- ♦ **Wash hands frequently and thoroughly**
- ♦ **Don't touch eyes, nose, or mouth** without first washing your hands
- ♦ **Use household disinfectants to clean surfaces touched by the sick person and other people** (door knobs, faucets, etc.)
- ♦ **Restrict visitors to the household** until five days after symptoms appeared.

FAQs ABOUT SWINE FLU

- ♦ Since Mid-April, there have been over 9,000 hospitalizations and nearly 600 deaths due to flu in the USA
- ♦ 97% of the Type A viruses identified have been the H1N1 strain - the "swine flu" of 2009.
- ♦ You cannot get swine flu from eating pork
- ♦ Symptoms of swine flu are similar to symptoms of regular human seasonal flu, including fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue
- ♦ Five manufacturers are contracted to make H1N1 (swine flu) vaccine: by mid-October, it is expected there will be 45 million to 52 million doses of vaccine available; this will be followed by weekly releases of additional doses (up to 195 million) by the end of the year.
- ♦ Targeted groups of persons to receive the first available vaccine include pregnant women, people who live with or care for children younger than 6 months of age, healthcare and emergency medical services personnel, persons between the ages of 6 months and 4 years, children 5 through 18 years of age with chronic medical conditions; then, everyone else depending upon age and health status (current studies indicate the risk of infection among those age 65 and older is less than the risk for younger age groups).

FOR MORE INFORMATION, GO TO

www.cdc.gov/flu/weekly/fluactivity
www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/vaccination
www.cdc.gov/flu/swine/index
www.medscape.com/viewarticle/707843
"Seasonal Flu Checklist" from
www.redcross.org/www-files/Documents
www.immunize.org/express/issue821.asp

FLU SEASON ALERT!



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Influenza, or "the flu", is a highly contagious respiratory infection caused by different strains of viruses. In the USA, there is a flu season that begins every fall and ends every spring (called seasonal flu). Flu viruses spread from person to person when infected people cough, sneeze, or touch objects, contaminating them with the flu virus. Humans may spread the virus to others even before developing symptoms, and as long as five days after they become sick!

KNOW THE SYMPTOMS

- ◆ sudden onset of illness
- ◆ fever higher than 100.4°F (38°C)
- ◆ chills
- ◆ cough
- ◆ headache
- ◆ sore throat
- ◆ stuffy or runny nose
- ◆ severe muscle aches
- ◆ fatigue and/or exhaustion
- ◆ diarrhea, vomiting or abdominal pain (more common in children)

POTENTIAL RISKS

Serious complications of the flu may include

- ◆ bacterial pneumonia
- ◆ severe dehydration
- ◆ worsening of chronic (pre-existing) medical conditions
- ◆ ear infections
- ◆ sinus infections



PREVENTING THE SPREAD

Simple things you can do to help protect yourself and your family:

- ◆ **Wash your hands often with soap and warm water for 20 seconds.** If water is unavailable, use an alcohol-based gel (at least 60% alcohol).
- ◆ **Don't touch your eyes, nose or mouth without first washing your hands.** These are the places that the flu virus most easily enters our bodies

IMPORTANT TERMS

Seasonal flu: a contagious respiratory illness caused by flu viruses every year. It affects 5-20% of the US population, causing mild to severe illness and can lead to death.

Epidemic: the rapid spread of a disease that affects some or many people in a community or region at the same time.

Pandemic: an outbreak of disease that affects large numbers of people throughout the world and spreads rapidly

Swine flu: a respiratory disease in pigs caused by type A influenza viruses that cause regular outbreaks in pigs. People do not *normally* get swine flu, but human infections can and do happen; swine flu has been reported to spread from person-to-person.

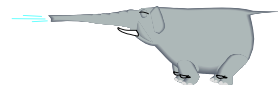
Avian (bird) flu: this strain of flu virus is naturally occurring in birds; wild birds can carry the virus and may not get sick from it, however, domestic birds may become infected by the virus and often die from it.

Immunity to a disease means the presence of antibodies that offer protection (resistance) to that disease, either by having had the disease in the past or by receiving vaccination. Because flu viruses change over time, immunity cannot carry over from year to year without repeat vaccination.

Quarantine: the physical separation of people who have been exposed to an infectious disease from those who have not been exposed.

Isolation: separation between persons or groups to prevent the spread of infectious diseases

Social distancing is a practice that limits face-to-face interaction in order to prevent exposure and disease transmission



- ◆ **Avoid close contact with people who are ill!** Encourage people who are ill to stay home from work, school, social gatherings when sick

- ◆ **Disinfect items people frequently touch** - this includes door knobs, toys, keyboards, faucets, remote controls, phones, and light switches. Use a household disinfectant or mix 1 part chlorine bleach with 10 parts water (make a fresh batch every 24 hours...)



- ◆ **Get a flu shot (or two!H)** - an annual flu shot is one of the most effective ways to reduce the risk of illness and death; the flu *shot* is made from a killed virus - it cannot give you the flu! (The nasal spray vaccine is made from a live virus, and should only be given to otherwise healthy people.) It takes your immune system 2-3 weeks to produce protective antibodies after you receive the flu vaccine; if you are exposed to flu viruses before the 2-3 weeks have elapsed, you may still get the flu, but probably a shorter, milder case. **H**Swine flu vaccines are being prepared separately but can be given at the same time as the seasonal flu vaccine is given

- ◆ **Practice good health habits** - get plenty of sleep, be physically active, eat properly and drink plenty of fluids, and manage your stress!

- ◆ **Avoid smoking** - smoking increases the risk of more serious complications

- ◆ **If you travel, ask your doctor or local public health officer about recommended vaccines...** avoid areas with active swine flu or avian flu outbreaks