

# SWINE FLU (H1N1) Update

*From CDC's website, updated May 1, 2009*

In response to an intensifying outbreak in the U.S. and internationally, caused by a new influenza virus of swine origin, the pandemic (worldwide) alert has been raised to LEVEL 5 as of April 29, 2009. Level 5 indicates “a strong signal that a pandemic is imminent and that the time to finalize the organization, communication and implementation of planned mitigation (control) measures is short”.

The United States Government has declared a public health emergency in the US. CDC's response goals are to reduce transmission and illness severity, and provide information to help health care providers, public health officials and the public to address the challenges posed by this emergency. CDC is issuing and updating interim guidelines daily in response to the rapidly changing situation. CDC's Division of Strategic National Stockpile (SNS) continues to send antiviral drugs, personal protective equipment including respiratory protection devices to all (The antiviral medications available by prescription do not prevent the flu infection, but shorten the time of illness and the severity of illness.) The US government and manufacturers have also begun the process of developing a vaccine against this new virus.

*NOTE: this process takes five to six months to grow the live virus on fertilized chicken eggs, then killing the virus, making the vaccine solution and purifying it before bottling and distribution to hospitals, clinics, and doctors' offices. After receiving the flu vaccine, your body needs two to three additional weeks to produce the protective antibodies... if you are given the vaccine, and a week later, develop symptoms of flu, it does not mean the vaccine caused the flu infection, but rather it didn't have adequate time to stimulate your immune system to provide protection!*

As of April 30 at 10:30 AM (EST), CDC had reported 109 laboratory-confirmed cases of swine flu in the US, with one death (a Mexican born infant visiting the US in Texas). CDC recommends the following common-sense measures:

- **Stay informed** by reliable sources – CDC or your local health department
- **Practice everyday measures** to stay healthy:
  - ▶ Cover your coughs and sneezes (use your elbow, not your hands!) – if you used a tissue, throw it away after you use it.
  - ▶ wash your hands often with soap and water – alcohol based gel hand cleansers are also effective unless your hands are heavily soiled
  - ▶ avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth – that's how the germs are introduced into your body (not by eating pork products!)
  - ▶ stay home if you're sick! – avoid contact with others to keep from infecting them
  - ▶ follow public health advice regarding school closures, avoiding crowds, and unnecessary contact (you *can* “share the peace” with just a smile!)

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