

# Swine Flu; Symptoms, Precautions & Treatments

## What is the swine flu?

Swine flu, also known as the H1N1 virus, is a relatively new strain of an influenza virus that causes symptoms similar to the regular flu. It originated in pigs but is spread primarily from person to person.

Swine flu made headlines in 2009 when it was first discovered in humans and became a pandemic. Pandemics are contagious diseases affecting people throughout the world or on multiple continents at the same time. Investigators decided the 2009 so-called "swine flu" strain, first seen in Mexico, should be termed novel H1N1 flu since it was mainly found infecting people and exhibits two main surface antigens, H1 (hemagglutinin type 1) and N1 (neuraminidase type1).

The World Health Organization (WHO) declared the H1N1 pandemic over in August 2010. Since then, the H1N1 virus has been known as a regular human flu virus. It continues to spread during flu season like other strains of the flu. The flu shot developed each year by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) usually includes a vaccination against a type of H1N1 virus.

## What are swine flu symptoms and signs?

Symptoms of swine flu are similar to most influenza infections: [fever](#) (100 F or greater), cough (usually dry), nasal secretions, [fatigue](#), and [headache](#), with [fatigue](#) being reported in most infected individuals. Some patients may also get a [sore throat](#), [rash](#), body (muscle) aches or pains, [headaches](#), [chills](#), [nausea](#), [vomiting](#), and [diarrhea](#).

# How is swine flu transmitted? Is swine flu contagious?

Swine flu is very contagious. The disease is spread through saliva and mucus particles. People may spread it by:

- **sneezing**
- **coughing**
- touching a **germ-covered surface** and then touching their eyes or nose

It is not transmitted by eating properly cooked pork products.

The newest swine flu virus that has caused swine flu is influenza A H3N2v (commonly termed H3N2v) that began as an outbreak in 2011. The "v" in the name means the virus is a variant that normally infects only pigs but has begun to infect humans. There have been small outbreaks of H1N1 influenza since the pandemic; a recent one is in India where at least three people have died.

## **Risk factors for swine flu**

When it first emerged, swine flu was most common in children 5 years and older and young adults. This was unusual because most flu virus infections are a higher risk for complications in older adults or the very young. Today, risk factors for getting swine flu are the same as for any other strain of the flu. You're most at risk if you spend time in an area with a large number of people who are infected with swine flu.

Some people are at higher risk for becoming seriously ill if they're infected with swine flu. These groups include:

- adults over age 65

- children under 5 years old
- young adults and children under age 19 who are receiving long-term aspirin (Bufferin) therapy
- people with compromised immune systems (due to a disease such as AIDS)
- pregnant women
- people with chronic illnesses such as asthma, heart disease, diabetes mellitus, or neuromuscular disease

## **What is the incubation period for swine flu?**

The incubation period for swine flu is about one to four days, with the average being two days; in some people, the incubation period may be as long as about seven days in adults and children.

## **What is the contagious period for swine flu?**

The contagious period for swine influenza in adults usually begins one day before symptoms develop in an adult and it lasts about five to seven days after the person becomes sick. However, people with weakened immune systems and children may be contagious for a longer period of time (for example, about 10 to 14 days).

## **How long does the swine flu last?**

In uncomplicated infections, swine flu typically begins to resolve after three to seven days, but the malaise and cough can persist two weeks or more in some patients. Severe swine flu may require hospitalization that increases the length of time of infection to about nine to 10 days.

## **What causes swine flu?**

The cause of the 2009 swine flu was an influenza A virus type designated as H1N1. In 2011, a new swine flu virus was detected. The new strain was named influenza A (H3N2)v. Only a few people (mainly children) were first infected, but officials from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported increased numbers of people infected in the 2012-2013 flu season. Currently, there are not large numbers of people infected with H3N2v. Unfortunately, another virus termed H3N2 (note no "v" in its name) has been detected and caused flu, but this strain is different from H3N2v. In general, all of the influenza A viruses have a structure similar to the H1N1 virus; each type has a somewhat different H and/or N structure.

## **Diagnosing swine flu**

Your doctor can make a diagnosis by sampling fluid from your body. To take a sample, your doctor or a nurse may swab your nose or throat.

The swab will be analyzed using various genetic and laboratory techniques to identify the specific type of virus.

## **Treating swine flu**

Most cases of swine flu don't require medication for treatment. You don't need to see a doctor unless you're at risk for developing medical complications from the flu. You should focus on relieving your symptoms and preventing the spread of the H1N1 to other people.

Two antiviral drugs are recommended for treating swine flu: the oral drugs oseltamivir (Tamiflu) and zanamivir (Relenza). Because flu viruses can develop resistance to these drugs, they're often reserved for people who are at high risk for complications from the flu. People who are otherwise generally healthy and get swine flu will be able to fight the infection on their own.

Nasovac-S as nasal Spray is available for protection against H1N1 virus. A dose of 0.5 ml is administered as 0.25 ml per nostril using a 1.0 ml syringe and a spray device. The vaccine is approved by the Drug Controller General of India (DCGI) for usage by any individual above 3 years of age, except pregnant women.

**Vaccines-** Agripal inj, Fluarix ,Influgen , Nasovac-s , Vaxigrip are influenza virus vaccine (injection) available from different companies for protection against H1N1 virus.

## **Outlook for swine flu**

Severe cases of swine flu can be fatal. Most fatal cases occur in those with underlying chronic medical conditions, such as HIV or AIDS. The majority of people with swine flu recover and can anticipate a normal life expectancy.

## **Preventing swine flu**

The best way to prevent swine flu is to get a yearly flu vaccination. Other easy ways to prevent swine flu include:

- frequently washing hands with soap or hand sanitizer
- not touching your nose, mouth, or eyes (The virus can survive on surfaces like telephones and tabletops.)
- staying home from work or school if you're ill
- avoiding large gatherings when swine flu is in season

It's important to follow any public health recommendations regarding school closures or avoiding crowds during the flu season. These recommendations

may come from the CDC, WHO, National Institutes of Health, or other governmental public health institutions.

**Guide Line for Pharmacist to combat H1N1 influenza virus:**

Following Precautions must be taken by Pharmacists while on job.

- Take yearly influenza virus vaccine (injection) without fail.
- Always wear good quality mask to protect them.
- Use hand gloves & hand sanitizers at frequent interval.
- Give information regarding swine flu to all their patients, orally & by means of awareness posters.

**Phone Help Line No 104:** C.G State Health department is having 24\*7 hrs helpline No i.e. 104 to get any kind of information regarding Swine Flu or any diseases.