



# PRAIRIE VIEW A&M UNIVERSITY

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**TO:** Faculty and Staff

**FROM:** Mary Lee Hodge  
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**RE:** Swine Flu Facts and Resources

## **What is Swine Flu?**

Swine Flu Influenza A is a respiratory strain (H1N1) of viruses that causes regular outbreaks in pigs. While swine flu viruses have been reported to spread human-to-human in the past this infection did not progress beyond 3 people. The current swine flu contagion which began in late March and early April of 2009 in Mexico and cases have been reported in the United States, Canada and other countries across the globe. The current strain can be passed from person-to-person while the ease of contagion has yet to be determined. This infection is being monitored and all health policies are being propagated from [The Centers for Disease Control \(CDC\)](#). The CDC is the agency that monitors, directs and leads health investigations in the United States. They also develop and advocate health policies and implement prevention strategies. The CDC put out a [brochure on swine flu](#) which states that pigs most often are infected from other pigs but can get infected from viruses from birds or humans. This can lead to pigs becoming incubators for more virulent strains of flu to which humans can be susceptible to. Humans are not normally at risk at contracting swine flu viruses, but infections can and do happen. The current strain can be passed from person-to-person while the ease of contagion has yet to be determined.

## **Symptoms of Swine Flu**

The symptoms of swine flu, according to the CDC, are similar to the symptoms of the common flu. Many people are being tested for swine flu due to their recent exposure to Mexico or exposure to someone who has been to Mexico leading to a more likely exposure to the current H1N1 swine virus. The symptoms include fever, sore throat, cough, body aches, chills, and fatigue. Some suffers have exhibited vomiting and diarrhea. Severe illnesses including pneumonia and respiratory failure leading to death have been reported. And, as with all flu viruses, swine flu may worsen underlying chronic medical conditions. People who live in areas where the swine flu has been reported, [the Centers for Disease Control is keeping a current list here](#), may want to contact their health care provider especially if they are concerned about their symptoms. The health care provider will determine if influenza testing or further treatment is needed.

If you do get sick, you should stay home and avoid contact with other people as much as possible to keep from spreading the infection to others.

Children who experience any of the following symptoms should be taken to emergency medical care:

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Not waking up or not interacting
- Being so irritable the child doesn't want to be held
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough
- Fever with a rash

In adults, emergency warning signs include:

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting

### **Spread of Swine Flu**

Based on current findings of the CDC, Swine Flu appears to be spreading in the same way any other seasonal flu spreads. Flu spreads person-to-person by coughing or sneezing by people with influenza. Flu can also spread by touching infected surfaces and then touching your nose, eyes or mouth. Surfaces can stay infected for 2 hours or longer. Infected people can be infectious for 1 day before symptoms appear and 7 or more days after becoming sick. That means people can spread the flu virus before they are even exhibiting any symptoms of the flu and before they even know they are sick.

### **Prevention of Swine Flu**

Swine Flu, like any other flu exposure, is minimized with good hygiene techniques and by general wellness care. The following precautions are recommended by the CDC:

- You should be washing your hands often. [Alcohol-based sanitizers](#) are also effective at killing viruses.
- Get plenty of sleep, avoid stress, drink plenty of fluids, and eat nutritious foods.
- Avoid touching surfaces that may be contaminated with the flu virus; common surfaces that could hold viruses would be desktops, doorknobs, or tables. [Disposable gloves](#) can be an option for people who want extra protection.
- Avoid contact with people who might be sick.
- Cover your mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw your tissue into a wastebasket.
- Avoid touching your eyes, mouth or nose.
- If you get sick with influenza, CDC recommends that you stay home from work or school and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them.

The CDC has also [released a document](#) intended to provide guidance for people who are unable to avoid people who would be considered contagious with the swine flu. These CDC guidelines, titled "Interim Recommendations for Facemask and Respirator Use in Certain Community Settings Where Swine Influenza A (H1N1) Virus Transmission Has Been Detected," suggest use with either a surgical mask or a N95 respirator to protect from airborne virus contamination. Click here to view some [N95 respirator options](#).

### **What if I get Swine Flu?**

Most of the people who have come down with symptoms of swine flu in the United States have had very mild symptoms. There are, however, [antiviral drugs which the CDC has provided more information on](#), which are effective against this current strain of swine flu. Both oseltamivir and zanamivir are prescription anti-viral drugs which are effective against swine flu. They can make your illness milder and help you get better faster.

**Sources for More Information**

[Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Swine Flu Home Page](#)

[CDC Swine Flu Brochure](#)

[Government Page on Pandemic Flu Information with Links to Current Swine Flu Information](#)

MLH/cpc

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