

Swine Influenza Advice for the Public

Advice to returned travellers from countries affected by swine influenza.

Human cases of swine influenza have been reported in Mexico and certain areas of the United States of America. This is an evolving situation and it is likely that more countries will be affected. A list of countries affected can be found at hpa.org.uk.

Symptoms of swine influenza are similar to those of seasonal influenza, usually a feverish illness accompanied by one or more of cough, sore throat, headache and muscle aches. For most people this illness appears to be mild. Infection with this virus is treatable with the anti-viral drugs oseltamivir (Tamiflu®) and zanamivir (Relenza®).

What should I do if I have returned from a country affected by swine influenza?

If you have recently visited one of the countries or areas where human cases of influenza have been identified, it is important for you to monitor your health closely for seven days after your visit to the affected area. There is no need for you to isolate yourself from other people as long as you remain well.

If during this period you develop a feverish illness accompanied by one or more of cough, sore throat, headache and muscle aches, you should contact your GP by phone or seek advice from NHS Direct (0845 4647). You should make sure that you tell those from whom you are seeking advice about your recent travel to an area affected. Depending on your symptoms you may be advised that further investigations may be necessary.

If further investigations are felt to be needed you will be advised on appropriate arrangements for you to be tested. This may include admission to hospital. For most cases however, you will be well enough to remain at home. It is important you avoid contact with other people as much as possible until the results of your tests are back. Your household contacts should also monitor their health and follow the above advice if they get symptoms.

Should you develop symptoms you should follow standard respiratory and hand hygiene and ensure that:

- You avoid contact with other people as much as possible
- You cover your nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing, using a tissue when possible.
Dispose of dirty tissues promptly and carefully.
- Maintain good basic hygiene, for example washing hands frequently with soap and water to reduce the spread of the virus from your hands to face or to other people.
- Clean hard surfaces (eg door handles) frequently using a normal cleaning product.
- Make sure your children follow this advice.

What are the symptoms of swine influenza?

The symptoms of swine influenza in people are similar to the symptoms of regular human seasonal influenza infection and include fever, fatigue, lack of appetite, coughing and sore throat. Some people with swine flu have also reported vomiting and diarrhoea.

What measures can I take to prevent infection?

General infection control practices and good respiratory hand hygiene can help to reduce transmission of all viruses, including the human swine influenza. This includes:

- Covering your nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing, using a tissue when possible.
- Disposing of dirty tissues promptly and carefully.
- Maintaining good basic hygiene, for example washing hands frequently with soap and water to reduce the spread of the virus from your hands to face or to other people.
- Cleaning hard surfaces (e.g. door handles) frequently using a normal cleaning product.
- Making sure your children follow this advice.

Is treatment available?

Testing has shown that the human swine influenza H1N1 is sensitive to can be treated with the antivirals oseltamavir (Tamiflu) and zanamivir (Relenza).

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