



SPECIAL EDITION MAY 4, 2009

LANCASTER COUNTY EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

LEMA NEWS

H1N1 FLU — The Facts

Perspective, Education, Precautions



An effective way to prevent flu transmission is through washing hands.

H1N1 Flu For More Information

**Call
1-877- PA-HEALTH**

Or Visit;

www.health.state.pa.us

www.pandemicflu.state.pa.us

www.cdc.gov/swineflu

www.cdc.gov/germstopper/home_work_school.htm

From the Desk of Randall S. Gockley—Coordinator

The H1N1 Flu, formerly noted as the Swine Flu, has created concern world-wide. While the disease continues to spread across the United States, some may feel overwhelmed and anxious. This Special Edition of LEMA News is meant to provide insight into the situation and how to deal with direct and indirect aspects. The intent of this issue is to foster perspective, promote education and prescribe precautions that apply to daily life regardless of this situation.

Background

H1N1 Influenza is a respiratory disease of pigs caused by type A influenza viruses that causes regular outbreaks in pigs. People do not normally get swine flu, but human infections can and do happen. Swine flu viruses have been reported to spread from person-to-person, but in the past, this transmission was limited and not sustained beyond three people.

In late March and early April 2009, cases of human infection with H1N1 influenza A viruses were first reported in Southern California and near Guadalupe County, Texas. Other U.S. states have reported cases of H1N1 flu infection in humans and cases have been reported internationally as well. Updated case counts of confirmed H1N1 flu infections in the United States is available on the CDC website. CDC and local and state health agencies are working together to investigate this situation.

CDC has determined that this H1N1 influenza A virus is contagious and is spreading from human to human. However, at this time, it is not known how easily the virus spreads between people. The symptoms of H1N1 flu in people are similar to the symptoms of regular human flu and include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people have reported diarrhea and vomiting associated with H1N1 flu. In the past, severe illness (pneumonia and respiratory failure) and deaths have been reported with H1N1 flu infection in people. Like seasonal flu, H1N1 flu may cause a worsening of underlying chronic medical conditions.

H1N1 influenza viruses are not spread by food. You cannot get H1N1 influenza from eating pork or pork products. Eating properly handled and cooked pork products is safe. Sometimes people may become infected by touching something with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth or nose.

Anyone Can Get the Flu; But for Some People is More Severe



Most people who get influenza will recover in a few days to less than 2 weeks, but some people will develop life-threatening complications (such as pneumonia) as a result of the flu. Millions of people in the United States — about 5% to 20% of U.S. residents — will get influenza each year. An average of about 36,000 people per year in the United States die from influenza-related causes, and more than 200,000 have to be admitted to the hospital as a result of influenza-related causes. Anyone can get the flu (even healthy people), and serious problems from influenza can happen at any age. People age 65 years and older, people of any age with chronic medical conditions (such as asthma, diabetes, or heart disease), pregnant women, and young children are more likely to get complications from influenza. Pneumonia, bronchitis, and sinus and ear infections are three examples of complications from flu. The flu can make chronic health problems worse. For example, people with asthma may experience asthma attacks while they have the flu, and people with chronic congestive heart failure may have worsening of this condition that is triggered by the flu.



Interim Guidance for Swine influenza A (H1N1): Taking Care of a Sick Person in Your Home

Swine influenza— A virus infection (swine flu) can cause a wide range of symptoms, including fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people have reported diarrhea and vomiting associated with swine flu. People with swine flu also can have vomiting and diarrhea. Like seasonal flu, swine flu in humans can vary in severity from mild to severe. Severe disease with pneumonia, respiratory failure and even death is possible with swine flu infection. Certain groups might be more likely to develop a severe illness from swine flu infection, such as persons with chronic medical conditions. Sometimes bacterial infections may occur at the same time as or after infection with influenza viruses and lead to pneumonias, ear infections, or sinus infections.

How Flu Spreads

The following information can help you provide safer care at home for sick persons during a flu pandemic.

- The main way that influenza viruses are thought to spread is from person to person in respiratory droplets of coughs and sneezes.
- This can happen when droplets from a cough or sneeze of an infected person are propelled through the air and deposited on the mouth or nose of people nearby. Influenza viruses may also be spread when a person touches respiratory droplets on another person or an object and then touches their own mouth or nose (or someone else's mouth or nose) before washing their hands.
- People with swine flu who are cared for at home should:
 - check with their health care provider about any special care they might need if they are pregnant or have a health condition such as diabetes, heart disease, asthma, or emphysema
 - check with their health care provider about whether they should take antiviral medications
 - get plenty of rest and drink clear fluids (such as water, broth, sports drinks, electrolyte beverages for infants) to keep from being dehydrated
 - cover coughs and sneezes. Clean hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub often and especially after using tissues and after coughing or sneezing into hands.
 - avoid close contact with others – do not go to work or school while ill
 - be watchful for emergency warning signs (see below) that might indicate you need to seek medical attention

Managing Your Anxiety about H1N1



The sudden and near-constant stream of news reports about swine flu can cause anyone to feel anxious and worried. These reactions are understandable because there are unknowns about the spread and severity of the illness. Even during this period of uncertainty, you can take several steps to manage your anxiety and have a positive outlook.

Keep things in perspective. Government officials need to prepare for worst-case scenarios in order to protect the public. The public, however, does not need to expect the worst. To date, the cases that have been identified in the United States are not severe. There has been one hospitalization and no deaths. Also, twelve previous cases of swine flu in the United States between 2005 and 2009 were treated and the illness did not spread.

Get the facts. Gather information that will help you accurately determine your risk so that you can take reasonable precautions. Find a credible source you can trust such as news from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (<http://cdc.gov/swineflu/>), a local or state public health agency, or local elected official such as a state governor. This is a rapidly evolving situation, so gather information at regular intervals in order to help you distinguish facts from rumors. Be wary of unsubstantiated rumors, which can be upsetting and may deter you from taking appropriate action.

Public health agencies around the globe are working on identifying outbreaks of the illness and to ensure the availability of the best medical care to those who are sick. Throughout the centuries, people have survived difficult life circumstances and gone on to live fulfilling and productive lives. There is no reason why this situation cannot be similar. Limit worry and agitation by lessening the time you and your family spend watching or listening to upsetting media coverage.

Stay healthy. A healthy lifestyle—including proper diet and exercise—is your best defense against any disease threat. **Adopting hygienic habits such as washing your hands regularly will also minimize your exposure to all types of germs and disease sources.** A healthy body can have a positive impact on your thoughts and emotions, enabling you to make better decisions and deal with the flu's uncertainties.

Have a plan. Think about how you might respond if swine flu were discovered in your area. You may want to stock up on non-perishable foods in case officials recommend staying home, explore options for working from home, and caring for sick family members, and establish an emergency family communication plan. Explore how you might spend your time if schools or businesses are closed. Working out some of these scenarios in advance can lessen your anxiety.

Communicate with your children. Discuss swine flu with honest and age-appropriate information. If your children have concerns, addressing those together may ease their anxiety and distress. Parents can also help allay distress by focusing children on routines and schedules that remain unchanged despite any changes due to swine flu preparations. Remember that children will observe adults behaviors and emotions for cues on how to manage their own emotions during this time.

Keep connected. Maintaining social networks can foster a sense of normality, and provide valuable outlets for sharing feelings and relieving stress. If officials have recommended limiting your social contact to contain an outbreak, you can stay connected via e-mail and telephone. Seek additional help. If you have intense feelings of anxiety or hopelessness or are having trouble performing your job or other daily activities, a licensed mental health professional such as a psychologist can help you develop an appropriate strategy for moving forward. You can find psychologists near you by contacting your state psychological association or through APA's psychologist locator.

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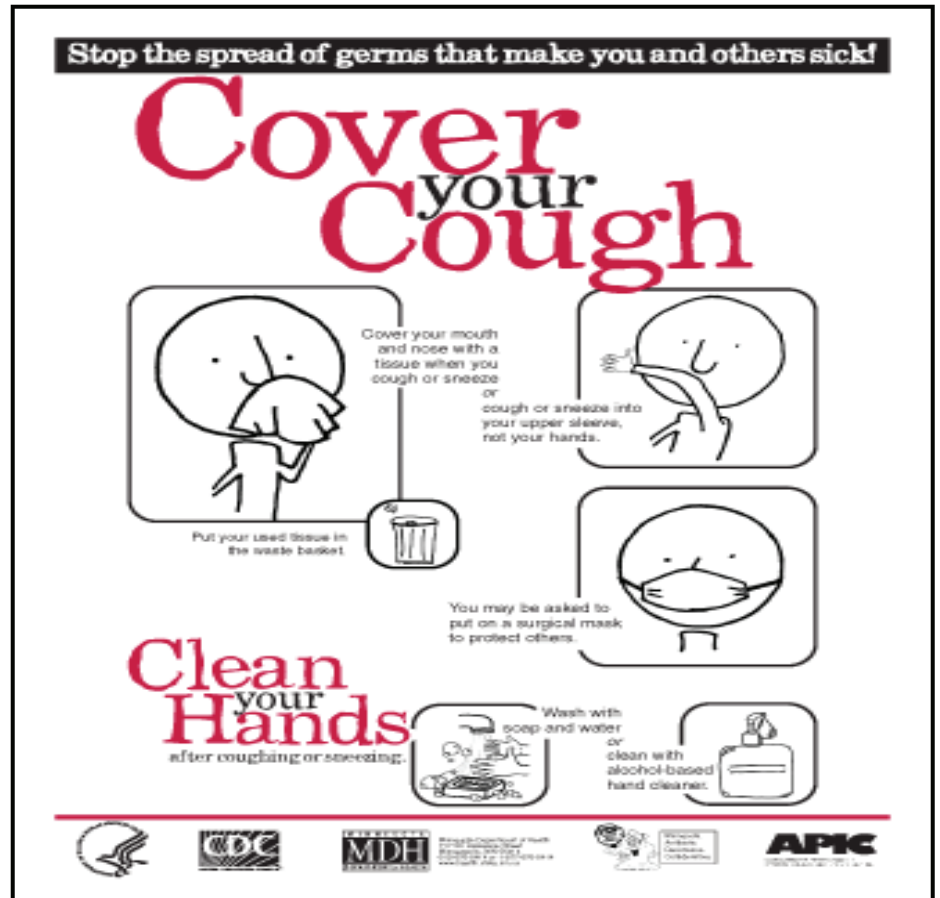
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KEEP INFORMED—KNOW THE RESOURCES

A defense that everyone can engage in is being informed. Below are several websites that you can access to learn more about the H1N1 Flu and other frequently asked questions.

www.health.state.pa.us ; www.pandemicflu.state.pa.us ; www.cdc.gov/swineflu