



Swine Flu Question and Answers

25 May 2009

What is H1N1 Influenza 09 (Human Swine Influenza)?

The Human Swine Influenza virus is a new flu virus that is infecting people and spreading from person to person. Cases of Human Swine Influenza have been confirmed in countries throughout the world by the World Health Organization and there have now been confirmed cases of Human Swine Influenza in Australia.

Human Swine Influenza is spread from person to person in the same way seasonal influenza and other common respiratory infections spread. Human Swine Influenza viruses are not spread by food. You cannot get Human Swine Influenza from eating properly handled and prepared pork or pork products.

What is the current situation in Queensland?

There have now been confirmed cases of Human Swine Influenza in Queensland.

Queensland Health staff are available at Brisbane, Cairns and the Gold Coast airports to screen passengers arriving on international flights.

What are the symptoms?

The symptoms of Human Swine Influenza are similar to those of seasonal influenza, including:

- fever and any one of the following
- cough, sore throat, runny nose or nasal congestion.

How can it be prevented?

The seasonal influenza vaccine is unlikely to offer useful protection against H1N1 Influenza. However, it is strongly recommended that people continue to be vaccinated against seasonal influenza.

For both seasonal and H1N1 Influenza, the best way to protect yourself and others is to:

- stay home when you are sick
- wash your hands frequently with soap and water or use an alcohol based hand gel
- wash your hands prior to touching your eyes, nose or mouth
- when coughing or sneezing, cover your mouth and nose with disposable tissues which should be disposed of immediately
- don't share items such as cigarettes, glasses or cups, lipstick, toys or anything which could be contaminated with respiratory secretions





- maintain at least one metre distance from people who have flu-like symptoms such as coughing or sneezing
- consult your doctor if you have a cough and fever, and follow their instructions, including taking medicine as prescribed
- if attending a medical practice or hospital Emergency Department, telephone beforehand so they can arrange for you to be seen away from other people.

Current information suggests that anti-viral drugs (Tamiflu® and Relenza®) are effective against Human Swine Influenza.. It is not expected that the Australian seasonal influenza vaccine will provide protection against this new strain of influenza, however people over 65 and other vulnerable groups are still strongly recommended to be vaccinated as this will at least provide protection against seasonal influenza.

How do we test for swine flu?

Testing involves a nose and throat swab which is sent away to Queensland Health's Brisbane laboratory. Any initial test results that are positive are sent to the World Health Organization Collaborating Centre for Influenza in Victoria for confirmation.

What should I do if I have just returned from overseas?

Anyone who has been in Mexico, the USA or Canada recently, and has become ill within seven days of returning should consult their GP or hospital emergency department, especially if they have flu-like symptoms. They should phone their GP or hospital Emergency Department so that arrangements can be made. They should also stay at least 1 metre away from other people.

What is the incubation period?

The time between becoming infected and developing symptoms is 1 – 7 days.

Should I wear a mask to prevent becoming infected?

A mask can be worn by people with a respiratory illness to reduce the chance of them infecting others. There are no recommendations for the public to wear a mask at this stage.

Is it safe to eat pork meat and products?

Swine Influenza in pigs has never been reported or detected in Australia. Pork and pig meat products are safe to eat. For more information related to animal health visit www.dpi.qld.gov.au/cps/rde/dpi/hs.xsl/4790_13586_ENA_HTML.htm.



What is the Government doing?

The Queensland Government is working with the Commonwealth and other state governments to monitor the situation. Our public health response will continue to be reviewed in line with this. Queensland Health is also:

- monitoring for cases
- urgently testing suspect cases
- isolating all suspected cases in their homes and providing them with anti-virals
- placing nurses at the airports to meet all international flights, and has
- activated the Queensland Health Pandemic Influenza Plan
- activated the Population Health Sub-plan
- established the State Health Emergency Coordination Centre

Where can I get more information or help?

For daily updates visit www.health.qld.gov.au/swineflu/ or contact your local doctor, hospital or ring 13HEALTH (13 43 25 84). A Commonwealth Health Hotline for Swine Influenza has been established – ph. 1802007.