

WHAT IS IT?

Swine flu is a general term for flu viruses adapted to pigs. Swine flu can infect humans, most often from a pig to someone handling pigs. It can pass from human to human via coughing, sneezing or touching infected people or surfaces, then touching the mouth, nose or eyes.

SYMPTOMS

Symptoms are similar to regular flu: fever, fatigue, sore throat, cough, poor appetite, body aches and chills. Some people also have nausea, vomiting and diarrhea.

Health officials are recommending several steps to prevent the spread of the virus:

If you have flu symptoms, stay home from work or school to avoid spreading the disease. Do not return until two days after your symptoms are gone.

Wash your hands often and cover your nose and mouth when you cough or sneeze.

Go to the hospital if you have severe symptoms such as difficulty breathing; but if your symptoms are mild, stay home to avoid spreading the virus to others at the hospital.

Masks may be recommended for health care workers, family members and others who come in close contact with swine flu patients, but there is no need for the general public to wear masks.

It is safe to eat properly handled pork. Cook it to at least 160F.

The incubation time for swine flu is believed to be pretty short - 48 to 72 hours--and the virus seems to spread easily between people.

DON'T PANIC. Instead, call your doctor or local public health clinic before going in as long as you can breathe well. Obviously if breathing is getting worse, go to the doctor.