

# Key Facts about Swine Influenza (Swine Flu)

## Swine Flu

### What is Swine Influenza?

Swine Influenza (swine flu) is a respiratory disease of pigs caused by type A influenza virus that regularly causes outbreaks of influenza in pigs. Swine flu viruses cause high levels of illness and low death rates in pigs. Swine influenza viruses may circulate among swine throughout the year, but most outbreaks occur during the late fall and winter months similar to outbreaks in humans. The classical swine flu virus (an influenza type A H1N1 virus) was first isolated from a pig in 1930.

### How many swine flu viruses are there?

Like all influenza viruses, swine flu viruses change constantly. Pigs can be infected by avian influenza and human influenza viruses as well as swine influenza viruses. When influenza viruses from different species infect pigs, the viruses can reassort (i.e. swap genes) and new viruses that are a mix of swine, human and/or avian influenza viruses can emerge. Over the years, different variations of swine flu viruses have emerged. At this time, there are four main influenza type A virus subtypes that have been isolated in pigs: H1N1, H1N2, H3N2, and H3N1. However, most of the recently isolated influenza viruses from pigs have been H1N1 viruses.

## Swine Flu in Humans

### Can humans catch swine flu?

Swine flu viruses do not normally infect humans. However, sporadic human infections with swine flu have occurred. Most commonly, these cases occur in persons with direct exposure to pigs (e.g. children near pigs at a fair or workers in the swine industry). In addition, there have been documented cases of one person spreading swine flu to others. For example, an outbreak of apparent swine flu infection in pigs in Wisconsin in 1988 resulted in multiple human infections, and, although no community outbreak resulted, there was antibody evidence of virus transmission from the patient to health care workers who had close contact with the patient.

### How common is swine flu infection in humans?

In the past, CDC received reports of approximately one human swine influenza virus infection every one to two years in the U.S., but from December 2005 through February 2009, 12 cases of human infection with swine influenza have been reported.

### What are the symptoms of swine flu in humans?

The symptoms of swine flu in people are expected to be similar to the symptoms of regular human [seasonal influenza](#) and include fever, lethargy, lack of appetite and coughing. Some people with swine flu also have reported runny nose, sore throat, nausea, vomiting and diarrhea.

### Can people catch swine flu from eating pork?

No. Swine influenza viruses are not transmitted by food. You can not get swine influenza from

eating pork or pork products. Eating properly handled and cooked pork and pork products is safe. Cooking pork to an internal temperature of 160°F kills the swine flu virus as it does other bacteria and viruses.

### **How does swine flu spread?**

Influenza viruses can be directly transmitted from pigs to people and from people to pigs. Human infection with flu viruses from pigs are most likely to occur when people are in close proximity to infected pigs, such as in pig barns and livestock exhibits housing pigs at fairs. Human-to-human transmission of swine flu can also occur. This is thought to occur in the same way as seasonal flu occurs in people, which is mainly person-to-person transmission through coughing or sneezing of people infected with the influenza virus. People may become infected by touching something with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth or nose.

### **What do we know about human-to-human spread of swine flu?**

In September 1988, a previously healthy 32-year-old pregnant woman was hospitalized for pneumonia and died 8 days later. A swine H1N1 flu virus was detected. Four days before getting sick, the patient visited a county fair swine exhibition where there was widespread influenza-like illness among the swine.

In follow-up studies, 76% of swine exhibitors tested had antibody evidence of swine flu infection but no serious illnesses were detected among this group. Additional studies suggest that one to three health care personnel who had contact with the patient developed mild influenza-like illnesses with antibody evidence of swine flu infection.

### **How can human infections with swine influenza be diagnosed?**

To diagnose swine influenza A infection, a respiratory specimen would generally need to be collected within the first 4 to 5 days of illness (when an infected person is most likely to be shedding virus). However, some persons, especially children, may shed virus for 10 days or longer. Identification as a swine flu influenza A virus requires sending the specimen to CDC for laboratory testing.

### **What medications are available to treat swine flu infections in humans?**

There are four different antiviral drugs that are licensed for use in the US for the treatment of influenza: amantadine, rimantadine, oseltamivir and zanamivir. While most swine influenza viruses have been susceptible to all four drugs, the most recent swine influenza viruses isolated from humans are resistant to amantadine and rimantadine. At this time, CDC recommends the use of oseltamivir or zanamivir for the treatment and/or prevention of infection with swine influenza viruses.

### **What other examples of swine flu outbreaks are there?**

Probably the most well known is an outbreak of swine flu among soldiers in Fort Dix, New Jersey in 1976. The virus caused disease with x-ray evidence of pneumonia in at least 4 soldiers and 1 death; all of these patients had previously been healthy. The virus was transmitted to close contacts in a basic training environment, with limited transmission outside the basic training group. The virus is thought to have circulated for a month and disappeared. The source of the virus, the exact time of its introduction into Fort Dix, and factors limiting its spread and duration

are unknown. The Fort Dix outbreak may have been caused by introduction of an animal virus into a stressed human population in close contact in crowded facilities during the winter. The swine influenza A virus collected from a Fort Dix soldier was named A/New Jersey/76 (Hsw1N1).

**Is the H1N1 swine flu virus the same as human H1N1 viruses?**

No. The H1N1 swine flu viruses are antigenically very different from human H1N1 viruses and, therefore, vaccines for human seasonal flu would not provide protection from H1N1 swine flu viruses.

## **Swine Flu in Pigs**

**How does swine flu spread among pigs?**

Swine flu viruses are thought to be spread mostly through close contact among pigs and possibly from contaminated objects moving between infected and uninfected pigs. Herds with continuous swine flu infections and herds that are vaccinated against swine flu may have sporadic disease, or may show only mild or no symptoms of infection.

**What are signs of swine flu in pigs?**

Signs of swine flu in pigs can include sudden onset of fever, depression, coughing (barking), discharge from the nose or eyes, sneezing, breathing difficulties, eye redness or inflammation, and going off feed.

**How common is swine flu among pigs?**

H1N1 and H3N2 swine flu viruses are endemic among pig populations in the United States and something that the industry deals with routinely. Outbreaks among pigs normally occur in colder weather months (late fall and winter) and sometimes with the introduction of new pigs into susceptible herds. Studies have shown that the swine flu H1N1 is common throughout pig populations worldwide, with 25 percent of animals showing antibody evidence of infection. In the U.S. studies have shown that 30 percent of the pig population has antibody evidence of having had H1N1 infection. More specifically, 51 percent of pigs in the north-central U.S. have been shown to have antibody evidence of infection with swine H1N1. Human infections with swine flu H1N1 viruses are rare. There is currently no way to differentiate antibody produced in response to flu vaccination in pigs from antibody made in response to pig infections with swine H1N1 influenza.

While H1N1 swine viruses have been known to circulate among pig populations since at least 1930, H3N2 influenza viruses did not begin circulating among US pigs until 1998. The H3N2 viruses initially were introduced into the pig population from humans. The current swine flu H3N2 viruses are closely related to human H3N2 viruses.

**Is there a vaccine for swine flu?**

Vaccines are available to be given to pigs to prevent swine influenza. There is no vaccine to protect humans from swine flu. The seasonal influenza vaccine will likely help provide partial protection against swine H3N2, but not swine H1N1 viruses.

## **Related Links**

[INFLUENZA: Pigs, People and Public Health \(Fact Sheet\)](#)<sup>34</sup>

# Influenza porcina (gripe porcina)

English: Swine Flu Fact Sheet – April 23, 2009

## ¿Qué es la influenza porcina?

La influenza porcina es una enfermedad respiratoria de los cerdos, causada por la influenza tipo A, que provoca con frecuencia brotes de influenza entre estos animales. Aunque, por lo general, los virus de la influenza porcina no infectan a los humanos, se han presentado en algunas ocasiones casos de infecciones en personas. Los casos en humanos se presentan con mayor frecuencia en personas que están en contacto directo con cerdos.

**¿Cómo se propaga la influenza porcina?** Los virus de la influenza se pueden transmitir directamente de los cerdos a las personas y de las personas a los cerdos. Las infecciones en humanos por los virus de la influenza de los cerdos tienen más probabilidad de presentarse en las personas que están en contacto cercano con cerdos infectados, como los que trabajan en criaderos de cerdos y los que participan en ferias de exhibiciones de animales de cría. La transmisión de la influenza porcina entre humanos se cree que se transmite de la misma manera que la influenza estacional, principalmente de persona a persona cuando una persona con influenza tose o estornuda. Algunas veces, las personas pueden contagiarse al tocar algo que tiene el virus de la influenza y luego llevarse las manos a la boca o la nariz.

**¿Cuáles son los síntomas de la influenza porcina?** Los síntomas de la influenza porcina en las personas son similares a los de la influenza estacional común, y entre estos se incluyen fiebre, letargo, falta de apetito y tos. Algunas personas con influenza porcina han reportado también secreciones nasales, dolor de garganta, náuseas, vómitos y diarrea.

## ¿Cómo se diagnostican las infecciones por influenza porcina en humanos?

Para diagnosticar una infección de influenza porcina del tipo A, se debe recoger una muestra obtenida del aparato respiratorio entre los primeros 4 a 5 días de infección (cuando una persona infectada tiene más probabilidad de estar contagiando el virus). Sin embargo, algunas personas, especialmente los niños, pueden diseminar el virus durante 10 días o más. Para la identificación y confirmación del virus de la influenza porcina del tipo A es necesario enviar la muestra a los CDC para que se realicen pruebas de laboratorios.

**¿Existen medicamentos para el tratamiento de las personas con infecciones por influenza porcina?** Sí. Los CDC recomiendan el uso de oseltamivir y zanamivir para el tratamiento o la prevención de la infección por los virus de la influenza porcina.

## ¿La vacuna actual contra la influenza protege contra la influenza porcina tipo H1N1?

La vacuna contra la influenza estacional protege a las personas contra tres cepas de los virus de la influenza: un virus A (H3N2), un virus A (H1N1) y un virus B. Es poco probable

que la vacuna contra la influenza estacional proporcione protección contra los virus H1N1 de la influenza porcina.

**¿El virus de la influenza porcina H1N1 es igual a los virus H1N1 de la influenza en los seres humanos?** No. El virus H1N1 de la influenza porcina es muy diferente a los virus H1N1 de los humanos y H1N1 de la influenza aviar. Los anticuerpos de los virus H1N1 de la influenza aviar, porcina y humana proporcionan poca protección, si es que lo hacen, contra el virus H1N1 de cada una de las otras especies.

**¿Con qué frecuencia las personas se contagian con la influenza porcina tipo H1N1?** Aunque, por lo general, los virus de la influenza porcina no infectan a las personas, se han presentado casos esporádicos de infecciones en seres humanos. En los Estados Unidos, en el pasado, los CDC recibían notificaciones de un caso de infección por el virus de la influenza porcina en seres humanos cada uno o dos años aproximadamente; sin embargo, desde diciembre del 2005, se han reportado 14 casos de infecciones de la influenza porcina en personas.

**¿Con anterioridad se han presentado casos de contagio del virus de la influenza porcina de persona a persona?** Sí. Ha habido algunos casos documentados de personas que han contagiado el virus de la influenza porcina a otras personas. Por ejemplo, en Wisconsin en 1988, un supuesto brote de infecciones por influenza porcina en cerdos, causó múltiples infecciones en seres humanos y aunque no se estableció un brote en la comunidad, se identificaron anticuerpos que comprobaron la transmisión del virus de un paciente a personal de atención médica. (Wells D, JAMA 1991).

**¿Qué se hace para detectar otros casos de infecciones en personas por el virus H1N1 de la influenza porcina una vez que se ha detectado un caso?** Se realizan investigaciones epidemiológicas para detectar otros casos de infección por influenza porcina en humanos, entre las que se incluye el rastreo de contactos que tuvieron ambos pacientes. También se incrementa la implementación de medidas de vigilancia para detectar las infecciones de los virus de la influenza porcina en las personas.