



## FACT SHEET

### SWINE FLU GUIDANCE FOR OLDER ADULTS/SENIOR CITIZENS

**\*\*Senior citizens should treat swine flu like seasonal flu, because like seasonal flu, swine flu in humans can vary in severity from mild to severe. \*\***

#### **What is swine flu?**

Swine Influenza (swine flu) 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.

**What are the signs and symptoms of swine flu in people?** The symptoms of swine 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 swine flu. In the past, severe illness (pneumonia and respiratory failure) and deaths have been reported with swine flu infection in people. Like seasonal flu, swine flu may cause a worsening of underlying chronic medical conditions.

#### **What should I do to keep from getting the flu?**

First and most important: wash your hands. Try to stay in good general health. Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids, and eat nutritious food. Try not touch surfaces that may be contaminated with the flu virus. Avoid close contact with people who are sick.

#### **What can I do to protect myself from getting sick?**

There is no vaccine available right now to protect against swine flu. There are everyday actions that can help prevent the spread of germs that cause respiratory illnesses like influenza. Take these everyday steps to protect your health:

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- If you get sick with influenza, CDC recommends that you stay home from planned activities including social events, work, volunteering and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them.

### **How long can viruses live outside the body?**

We know that some viruses and bacteria can live 2 hours or longer on surfaces like cafeteria tables, doorknobs, and desks. Frequent hand washing will help you reduce the chance of getting contamination from these common surfaces.

### **What surfaces are most likely to be sources of contamination?**

Germs can be spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose, or mouth. Droplets from a cough or sneeze of an infected person move through the air. Germs can be spread when a person touches respiratory droplets from another person on a surface like a desk and then touches their own eyes, mouth or nose before washing their hands.

### ***General Safety Message:***

#### **In adults, emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention include:**

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting

If you have any flu symptoms call your doctor.

**For the most current information, please refer to <http://cdc.gov/swineflu/>**

For more information please call:

Cuyahoga County Board of Health 216-201-2091, [www.ccbh.net](http://www.ccbh.net)

Cleveland Department of Public Health 216-664-3609, [www.clevelandhealth.org](http://www.clevelandhealth.org)

Shaker Heights Department of Health: 216-491-3170, [www.shakeronline.com](http://www.shakeronline.com)