



Ministry of Health Malaysia

Swine Influenza

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

1. What is Swine Influenza?

Swine influenza (Swine Flu), is a highly contagious acute respiratory disease of pigs, caused by influenza A viruses that regularly causes diseases and outbreaks of influenza in pigs. Swine Flu viruses causes high level of illness (high morbidity) and low death rates (low mortality) at about 1-4 % in pigs. The mode of spreads of this virus among pigs is by aerosols and direct and indirect contact, and asymptomatic carrier pigs exist. In temperate countries, outbreaks in pigs occur throughout the year with an increased incidence in the fall and winter similar to outbreaks in humans.

2. How many Swine Flu viruses are there?

Swine Flu viruses change constantly as other influenza viruses. There are four main influenza A virus subtypes been isolated in pigs. Those viruses are most commonly of the H1N1 subtype, but other subtypes are also circulating in pigs (e.g., H1N2, H3N1, H3N2). Pigs can also be infected with avian influenza viruses and human seasonal influenza viruses as well as swine influenza viruses. The H3N2 swine virus was thought to have been originally introduced into pigs by humans. Sometimes pigs can be infected with more than one virus type at a time, which can allow the genes from these viruses to mix resulting in an influenza virus containing genes from a number of sources, called a "reassortant" virus. Although swine influenza viruses are normally species specific and only infect pigs, they do sometimes cross the species barrier to cause disease in humans.

Most of the recently isolated influenza viruses from pigs have been H1N1 viruses.

3. Where have human cases occurred?

Since the implementation of IHR (2005) in 2007, WHO has been notified of swine influenza cases from the United States and Spain.

4. 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 diarrhoea 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.

5. Is it safe to eat pork and pork products?

Yes. There is no evidence that Swine Flu can be transmitted through eating properly handled and prepared pork (pig meat) or other products derived from pigs. However, it is essential to cook pig meat properly. The swine influenza virus is killed by cooking temperatures of 160°F/70°C, corresponding to the general guidance for the preparation of pork and other meat.

6. How do people become infected?

Swine Flu does not normally infect humans, although sporadic cases do occur. People usually get swine influenza through contact with infected pigs, or environments contaminated with Swine Flu viruses. However, some human cases lack contact history with pigs or environments where pigs have been located. Human-to-human transmission has been documented in some instances but was limited to close contacts and closed groups of people.

7. Is there a human vaccine to protect from swine influenza?

No. Current seasonal influenza vaccine produced based on WHO recommendation does not contain swine influenza virus. It is unknown whether the seasonal vaccines can provide any cross protection to ongoing swine influenza virus infection in the United States and Mexico.

8. What drugs are available for treatment?

Most of the previously reported swine influenza cases recovered fully from the disease without requiring medical attention and without antiviral medicines.

9. How long can an infected person spread Swine Flu to others?

People with swine influenza virus infection should be considered potentially contagious as long as they are symptomatic and possible for up to 7 days following illness onset. Children, especially younger children, might potentially be contagious for longer periods.

10. What can I do to protect myself from getting sick?

There is no vaccine available right now to protect against Swine Flu. There are certain actions that can help prevent the spread of germs that cause respiratory illnesses like influenza such as:

- Cover your nose and mouth with a disposable tissue or handkerchief when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the waste basket 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.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- If you get sick with influenza, stay at home and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them. Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
- Consult your nearest health care facilities

**For more information please call Crisis Preparedness and Response Centre (CPRC), Ministry of Health Malaysia at 03-88810200/88810300 or email cprc@moh.gov.my
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