



Where Health Knows No Borders

What you should know about the Swine Flu

The City of El Paso Department of Public Health is continuing to monitor Swine Influenza cases in the U.S. and Mexico to help ensure the health and safety of our citizens. In addition, the department remains in constant communication with local, state and federal health partners regarding preparedness and response efforts for El Paso County. The department's goal is to reduce transmission and illness severity, and provide information to help health care providers, public health officials and the public address the challenges posed by this health threat.

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.

Are there confirmed cases of swine flu in El Paso County or other parts of the U.S.?

An updated case count of confirmed swine flu infections in the United States is kept at <http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/investigation.htm>.

As of April 30, 2009, there have been no confirmed cases of swine flu in El Paso County. Most of the cases reported in the U.S. have been mild.

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.

Can I get swine flu from eating or preparing pork?

No. Swine influenza viruses are not spread by food. You cannot get swine influenza from eating pork or pork products. Eating properly handled and cooked pork products is safe.

How does swine flu spread?

Spread of this swine influenza A (H1N1) virus is thought to be happening in the same way that seasonal flu spreads. Flu viruses are spread mainly from person to person through coughing or sneezing of people with influenza. Sometimes people may become infected by touching something with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth or nose.

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.

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 work or school and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them.

What should I do if I get sick?

If you live become ill with influenza-like symptoms, including fever, body aches, runny nose, sore throat, nausea, or vomiting or diarrhea, you may want to contact their health care provider or seek urgent medical care.

The Department of Public Health recommends that citizens avoid overwhelming emergency rooms or doctors' offices if under usual circumstances they wouldn't seek medical care for their illness since this could delay service for those who are seriously ill.

If you are sick, you should consider staying home from work or school to limit your contact with others.

Please do not seek flu testing unless you are severely ill and your physician recommends testing. Your treatment will be the same no matter what kind of flu you have. Testing supplies and testing facilities are limited. Due to the limited resources, only those who are likely to have the swine flu should be tested. The testing is only intended to allow health

officials keep track swine flu cases in El Paso County. The tests results will not impact the type of medical treatment provided.

Travel Warnings

The CDC has issued a recommendation that U.S. travelers avoid all nonessential travel to Mexico. Any changes to this recommendation will be posted at <http://www.cdc.gov/travel/>.

Where can I get more information about swine flu?

A local information service on swine flu has been established in El Paso County through the Department of Public Health and the Paso Del Norte Health Foundation.

This new service provided in English and in Spanish is available 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday by calling (915) 577-0970.

After hours the public may call (888) 777-5320, an information service on swine flu provided by the Texas Department of State Health Services.

The public may also call 2-1-1 around the clock, or 24/7, for information about swine flu.

Other Internet Resources

- U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention <http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/>
- U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Spanish)
http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/espanol/swine_espanol.htm
- Texas Department of State Health Services
<http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/swineflu/default.shtm>
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services <http://www.hhs.gov/>
- World Health Organization <http://www.who.int/en/>

Sources: City of El Paso Department of Public Health, Texas Department of State Health Services, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention