

## H1N1 SWINE FLU: HOW TO TAKE CARE OF A SICK PERSON IN YOUR HOME

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### What is the H1N1 Swine Flu?

Influenza A causes illness in humans and many animals. Some flu viruses are adapted to pigs and cause respiratory illness in them, and so have been called "swine flu." The swine flu is not transmitted from pigs to humans or caused by eating pork. The swine flu epidemic has been confirmed to be transmitted by person to person contact. The CDC has determined that the swine flu virus causing mild illness in some states is the same strain as the virus causing an outbreak of respiratory illness among humans in some areas of Mexico.

### Signs and symptoms of swine flu

Human symptoms for this new type of swine flu are similar to the symptoms of regular human flu that happens every year. These include: **fever, cough and sore throat. In addition, fatigue, lack of appetite, runny nose, nausea, vomiting and diarrhea have been reported.**

### How does swine flu spread?

Swine flu is thought to spread the same way the seasonal flu spreads, mainly from person to person through coughing or sneezing of people with the flu. It may also be spread by touching something with the flu virus on it then touching their mouth or nose.

### How to avoid getting sick

There is no vaccine available right now to protect against swine flu. Take actions to prevent the spread of germs that cause flu:

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze; or cough into your elbow. Throw the tissue away after you use it.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers are also effective. Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- If you are sick: STAY HOME and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them.
- There is no need to get tested for swine flu unless you are currently ill with flu symptoms.

**Contact Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department if you have questions or suspected cases of swine flu.**

### Seek emergency medical care if the sick person at home:

- has difficulty breathing or chest pain
- has purple or blue discoloration of the lips
- is vomiting and unable to keep liquids down
- has signs of dehydration such as dizziness when standing, absence of urination, or in infants, a lack of tears when they cry
- has seizures (for example, uncontrolled convulsions)
- is less responsive than normal or becomes confused

### How to care for a sick person with the flu at home

People with swine flu who are cared for at home should:

- Check with their health care provider about any special care they might need if they are pregnant or have a health condition such as diabetes, heart disease, asthma, or emphysema
- Check with their health care provider about whether they should take antiviral medications
- Stay home for 7 days after the start of illness and fever is gone
- Get plenty of rest. Wear light clothing.
- Drink clear fluids (such as water, broth, sports drinks, electrolyte beverages for infants) to keep from being dehydrated.
- Treat fever with Tylenol or Ibuprofen.
- Cover coughs and sneezes.
- Clean hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub often and especially after using tissues and after coughing or sneezing into hands.
- Avoid close contact with others – do not go to work or school while ill.
- If you need to seek medical care, it is better to contact your health care provider by phone or other remote means before seeking care in the medical clinic or hospital.
- If you are ill and must go into the community to seek medical care, you should wear a mask to reduce the risk of spreading the virus. If a face mask is unavailable, cover your mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing.
- Be watchful for emergency warning signs (see above) that might indicate you need to seek medical attention