



Key Facts on Swine Flu

One goal of the LCM District is to provide a safe learning and working environment for students and staff. An important way that we do that is to teach healthy lifestyles. That includes providing information to the families of our students when the need arises.

The current outbreak of Swine Influenza in different areas of the country has raised some questions that we feel need to be answered for the LCM community. In a release from the Region V Education Service Center, an official said that, "The most important information to stress to students and community is to wash your hands, cover your cough, and if you suspect a child has the flu, don't give them aspirin. Call your physician immediately." The following information should answer some of your questions concerning swine flu.

From the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

What is Swine Influenza? Swine Influenza (swine flu) is a respiratory disease of pigs caused by type A influenza viruses. Outbreaks of swine flu happen regularly in pigs. People do not normally get swine flu, but human infections can and do happen. Most commonly, human cases of swine flu happen in people who are around pigs but it's possible for swine flu viruses to spread from person to person also.

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.

How do you catch swine flu?

Spread of swine flu can occur in two ways:

- Through contact with infected pigs or environments contaminated with swine flu viruses.
- Through contact with a person with swine flu. Human-to-human spread of swine flu is thought to occur in the same way as seasonal flu; person-to-person through coughing or sneezing of infected people.

How long can an infected person spread swine flu to others?

People with swine influenza virus infection should be considered potentially contagious from one day prior to the onset of symptoms to as long as they are symptomatic and possibly for up to 7 days following the onset of illness. 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.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- If you get sick with influenza, stay home from work or school and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.

What should I do if I get sick?

If you are sick, you should stay home and avoid contact with other people as much as possible to keep from spreading your illness to others. If you become ill and experience any of the following warning signs, seek emergency medical care.

In children emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention include:

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Not waking up or not interacting
- Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough
- Fever with a rash

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

Can I get swine influenza 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.

The Department of Health has set up a public information hotline.

The number is: 888-777-5320