

Swine Flu and You

There has been a great deal of publicity and panic regarding swine flu. This new virus was first detected in people in the United States in April 2009. It is caused by a new swine flu virus (H1N1) that allows it to spread from person to person.

The symptoms of swine flu include fever, chills, cough, sore throat, runny nose, body aches, headache, and fatigue. Many people with swine flu have had diarrhea and vomiting. Most people who have become ill with this new virus have recovered.

Everyone has seen TV footage of Mexican citizens wearing masks in an attempt to protect against the swine flu. Unfortunately, those masks are ineffective when it comes to protecting those uninfected individuals from inhaling the virus.

HERE ARE SOME EFFECTIVE STEPS THAT YOU CAN TAKE:

- 1 Most important of all is frequent hand washing in hot soapy water. Next, get plenty of sleep to keep your immune system in top flu-fighting shape
- 2 Drink 8-10 8-oz. glasses of water each day to flush toxins from your system and maintain good moisture and mucous production in your sinuses.
- 3 Keep your body strong, nourished, and ready to fight infection by keeping your immune system strong. Fatty foods can slow your metabolism, make you feel sluggish, and compromise your immune system. So stick with whole grains, colorful vegetables, and vitamin-rich fruits.
- 4 Avoid large quantities of alcohol. Alcohol is an immune suppressant that can actually decrease your resistance to viral infections like swine flu. For women, alcohol suppresses estrogen production, which further impairs the immune system.
- 5 Get mild to moderate exercise—for example, brisk walking for 30-40 minutes 3-4 times a week—supports the immune system by increasing circulation, oxygenating the body, purging toxins through sweat, and releasing tension and stress.



- 6 Be aware of what surfaces you touch. Anything you touch that has been in the hands of others may allow the virus to pass from one person to another. So when you've shaken hands with someone, or when you're using something like a pen that others have recently used, don't touch your face or put your hand in your mouth until you've had a chance to wash your hands.
- 7 Avoid contact with sick people. If you have to be around someone who is sick, try to stay a few feet away from them and avoid physical contact.
- 8 Swine flu can look like the regular flu. Go to your doctor if you live in an area where there are documented cases, or if your symptoms are severe.
- 9 Try to reduce your stress levels. Stress releases hormones into your bodies that can compromise your immune systems and actually make you more susceptible to viruses like swine flu.

For more information on preparedness planning, see the U.S. government's pandemicflu.gov web site.

BOTTOM LINE: Swine flu is likely to be in the area this fall and winter. Take these few steps to reduce your likelihood of contracting swine flu.



Dr. Neil Baum is a physician at Touro Infirmary and can be reached at (504) 891-8454 or via his website: www.neilbaum.com