

Wayland Baptist University
Q and A on the Swine Flu

What is swine flu? Swine flu is a group of influenza type A viruses that normally causes flu in pigs. This is a novel strain of a H1N1 virus; it has parts developed from birds and swine. It has changed so that it can be passed from human to human like the normal flu

What are the symptoms? It appears that the early symptoms are similar to seasonal flu - cough, fever, sore throat, headache, runny nose general fatigue, and muscle pains. Vomiting and diarrhea have also been noted. In some of the cases reported from Mexico, these have led to a pneumonia-like illness with difficulty breathing and even death.

How is this swine flu spreading? It is most likely spreading from person to person through infectious respiratory droplets (droplets generated when a person coughs or sneezes). It is possible that direct contact with infectious material by shaking hands with those who have coughed into their hands can transmit the flu virus.

How can I prevent getting sick?

- Be sure to wash your hands frequently with an alcohol-based hand cleaner or soap and water for 15 seconds.
- Avoid people who are obviously sick
- Avoid touching your face, and if you do, be sure your hands are clean.
- Sneeze or cough into your shirt sleeve rather than your hands, although this may not protect you it may help protect others you care about.

What should I do if I get sick?

- Go to the WBU nurse's office in the University Center on the Plainview campus or see your primary care clinician
- Avoid contact with large groups by staying home until you are better or your primary care clinician tells you that you are no longer infectious to others.

What is the infectious period? The infectious period for this strain is not yet known. According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, infected people should be considered potentially contagious:

- One day before their symptoms start
- Seven days after their symptoms start OR as long as they are still showing symptoms (whichever is longer)

Children, especially younger children, might potentially be contagious for longer periods. **If you are sick**, you should avoid going to classes until you are either better or are cleared by your primary care clinician.

If I was exposed, how long would it be until I would know I was sick?

Although we are not sure of the exact time for this version of the flu, the majority of patients develop symptoms within about 4 days. However for this new strain of flu, the incubation period may be longer and the CDC suggests that you monitor your health for 7 days after possible exposure.

Is there a vaccine? There is no specific vaccine against this swine flu as yet.

We are unsure of how much (if any) protection the regular seasonal flu vaccine will have to protect people against this strain of swine flu. Students and employees should NOT assume that the regular vaccine will give them full protection and if they do get sick still seek medical attention.

As a general good health practice, people should make sure all of their routine vaccinations are up to date. This includes pneumococcal vaccination for certain adults. This vaccine is usually recommended for all people over 65 years old and younger people with serious long-term health problems (heart disease, diabetes, alcoholism, COPD, emphysema, asthma, cancer treatment, HIV/AIDS).

Should students/employees come in to be vaccinated against seasonal flu? No, there is no evidence that the current flu vaccine will provide protection against this new swine flu at this time.

Can swine flu be treated with antiviral medications? YES, preliminary information indicates that the virus is sensitive to the newer antiviral medications oseltamivir (Tamiflu) and zanamivir (Relenza). It is resistant to the older medications amantadine and rimantidine.

Can I catch swine flu from eating pork or pork products? No.

Where can I get further information on the Swine Flu? You can go to the the CDC website at www.pandemicflu.gov or www.cdc.gov