

H1N1 Flu (Swine Flu) Frequently Asked Questions Sheet for Homeless People in Seattle and King County

What is the swine flu?

H1N1 flu, commonly called “swine flu,” is a form of flu virus that started in pigs, but became a human type of flu which spreads from human to human. The swine flu in the news is a new form of flu. It is getting a lot of attention because it is spreading around the world and it’s hard to tell how many people might get sick from it.

Can I get it from meat that comes from pigs, like bacon, pork or ham?

No. It does not spread from eating pork.

How would I know if I am sick?

You would experience **suddenly feeling bad**, with

- **FEVER** or fever and chills **AND** one or more of these:
- Headache
- Muscle aches (back, legs, arms)
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Vomiting and or diarrhea (not typical, but possible)

You have a fever if you take your temperature with a thermometer by mouth and it reads at 101 degrees F.

Should I go to the doctor if I have those symptoms?

- You might not need to. Talk to your case manager, shelter or drop-in center staff to let them know you are feeling sick. They will ask you some questions, might take your temperature, and see if you need to go to the clinic or hospital.
- If you get sick with those symptoms listed above and you have another health condition like diabetes, emphysema, heart disease, kidney disease or HIV or other conditions, please call your doctor for advice.
- If you have those symptoms and then feel worse, with trouble breathing, short of breath, or having chest pain, sudden dizziness, or if you suddenly feel confused and “out of it,” get help immediately and get to the hospital.

How long will I stay sick?

Usually between 5-10 days, but it varies from person to person.

How does it spread?

It spreads when a person who is infected with this virus:

- coughs or sneezes into the air and others get the virus in their eyes, nose, or mouth.
- coughs or sneezes on their hands and touches objects or surfaces that others touch and get to their eyes, nose or mouth.
- shares with another person an object with their spit on it, like a cigarette, a cup, spoon or fork.
- kisses another person on the face or lips.

How can I avoid getting swine flu?

- Wash your hands thoroughly and frequently.
- Hand sanitizer helps kill germs, but you must also wash your hands at least 6-8 times per day, including after using the bathroom, before preparing food for yourself or others and before eating or handling medication.
- Use hand sanitizer:
 - whenever you enter any building to avoid bringing germs in with you.
 - before and after using shared surfaces like computer keyboards in public places, shared telephones, and shared table tops.
 - before and after riding public transportation.
- Sneeze or cough into your elbow area, or down into the neck of your shirt or jacket, or into a napkin, paper towel or Kleenex tissue. Wash your hands or use hand sanitizer after you do that.
- Keep your hands off your face. Rub your eyes with a clean tissue. Don't fiddle with your moustache or pick your teeth with your fingers.
- Keep your distance from people who are coughing a lot.
- Try to spend time outside, get some exercise every day (a 20 minute walk), drink lots of water, tea and juices to stay hydrated. Try to get good sleep and rest.
- Encourage your friends to do these things.

Is there a vaccine?

No, not at this time.

If I had a flu shot, will that help me?

It may protect you from the regular flu, but probably not this swine flu. Do get your flu shot in the fall. It is still very important as many more people get sick and die from the "regular" flu every year!

Is there medicine to treat the swine flu?

Yes. That is something to ask your doctor about if you get sick with flu symptoms.

There is so much information on the TV, the internet, and in the newspapers. It makes me nervous!

- It is nerve wracking when so much attention is given to an issue like this. Try to get your information from reliable sources. What you hear will change frequently as new information becomes available.
- For questions, call the Flu Hotline, 877-903-KING (877-903-5464), TTY Relay: 711, 9 am - 5 pm (M - F), interpreters available
- You can look online at www.cdc.gov/swineflu or www.kingcounty.gov/health/swineflu for up to date information
- Talk to someone you know and trust if you feel overwhelmed or very anxious or scared.