

Flu Prevention Advice

Robert Emery, Dr PH, vice president for Safety, Health, Environment & Risk Management at UT Health Science Center and associate professor in the UT School of Public Health explains common sense preparedness and prevention of illness.

“There is a huge difference between preparedness and paranoia,” says Dr. Robert Emery, occupational health expert at the UT School of Public Health at Houston. “Although we’re dealing with a new strain of flu, a set of universally applicable preventive measures exist that can be employed right away by everyone to help stop the spread of this disease”

Proper hand hygiene



There’s a right way and useless way to wash hands—and wash away—micro-organisms. The object is to break down the protective membranes of germs, dislodge them from your hands and let them go down the drain. Plain soap in the right hands is strong stuff.

1. Lather well with a bar of soap or squirt a coin size of liquid soap in the palm of your hand.
2. Vigorously rub your hands together, soap up between your fingers, AND your wrists, front and back for 15 seconds. Sing the first chorus of any song you know and that’ll take you through the 15 seconds.
3. Rinse under warm, RUNNING water. Remember, the object is to dislodge germs. The force of water is key.
4. Dry thoroughly your hands with a disposable towel or under the blower, again, rubbing your hands together.
5. Discard the towel.

If you’re using alcohol-based gels as hand cleansers:

1. Put a dime-sized amount in one hand.
2. Vigorously rub your hands together and in between your fingers until the GEL IS DRY—about 30 seconds. DO NOT touch your face!
1. Once your hands are clean, do not touch your face, nose, eyes or lips.
2. Rubbing your eyes and nose provides a freeway for micro-organisms and good breeding ground once they’ve arrived.

(Over)

Swine Flu:

Top 12 answers you need to know

answered by infectious disease expert Charles Ericsson, M.D., professor of internal medicine and director of Travel Medicine at The University of Texas Medical School at Houston.



- 1. How do symptoms of swine flu differ from other types of flu?** None, really, although this flu might include gastrointestinal symptoms (diarrhea and vomiting), as well as the usual respiratory symptoms. The basic symptoms may include: fever (100°F+), sore throat, cough, stuffy nose, chills, headache and body aches, fatigue.
- 2. If I felt flu-like, how would I know if I had swine flu?** Swine flu is identified through a respiratory specimen taken within the first 4-5 days and sent to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). It is best not to report to the hospital, clinic or doctor's office, where you could risk spreading the disease. Again, call your doctor first to get instructions as to what you need to do next.
- 3. How long are people contagious?** Adults are potentially contagious for the length of time one has symptoms, up to 7 days following the beginning of illness. Children can be considered contagious longer, up to 10 days. The initial incubation period is 24-48 hours.
- 4. Is there medication for this?** Yes, although there is no vaccine, there are four anti-viral drugs commonly used to treat various strains of flu. Tami-flu or Relenza have shown to be effective against recently reported strains of swine flu. Prophylactic (preventative) use of anti-virals is not recommended. Previous vaccines for swine flu you might have taken would provide incomplete protection at best.
- 5. What are emergency warning signs of complications?** Emergency warning signs in children are: Fast breathing or trouble breathing, bluish skin color, not drinking enough fluids, not waking up or interacting, being very irritable, fever with a rash, Emergency warning signs in adults are: difficulty breathing or shortness of breath, pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen, sudden dizziness, confusion, severe or persistent vomiting.
- 6. Can I catch it from pigs or from eating pork?** No and absolutely not.
- 7. Can it kill me?** Deaths have been reported from the Mexico City outbreak but so far, cases reported in the US have been mild and no deaths have been reported (as of April 27, 2009).
- 8. Should I cancel my vacation to Mexico?** Check frequently with the CDC Web site for possible Travel Alerts. None of the more than 4,000 flights



Cover your cough

1. If you must cough or sneeze, cover your mouth with a tissue, your sleeve or your hand.
2. Throw the tissue away in a waste basket. Do not leave discarded tissues on your desk or other surfaces.
3. Then, wash you hands thoroughly.

The throw-it-away part is essential.

1. Micro-organisms live a life span from a few seconds to days on inanimate surfaces such as desks, table tops, faucets...tissues. If your tissues are scattered on your coffee table, they then are in contact with community surfaces. Both the tissues and the surface it sits on can spread germs to the person who touches the coffee table.

If you feel sick:

1. If you begin to feel ill: feverish, achy, have a dry, painful cough, sore throat, go home from school or work and call your health care provider for further instructions.
2. If you feel sick with flu-like symptoms and you care for the very young or the very elderly or the chronically ill, inform your health care provider when you call their office.
3. If you have recently traveled to Mexico or to one of the areas worldwide that has reported a swine flu outbreak, inform your health care provider. He or she may prefer to treat you with prescription anti-viral medications from home, or may request that you come in for a visit. Follow instructions from your health care providers.

From HealthLeader by Karen Krakower Kaplan

to Mexico from the US have been cancelled as of this writing. However, some international airports in Europe and Asia are stepping up precautions and issuing alerts.

9. What if I'm on a plane? Should I wear a mask? Not necessary. The air on a plane is filtered.

10. How long does the germ live on surfaces, like on my desk if someone sneezes in my office? Influenza virus survives only minutes on inanimate objects or hands. Influenza is most easily spread by droplets that come into contact with our mucus membranes such as when someone coughs or sneezes in our faces. Good hand washing can diminishing the spread of the disease.

11. What can I do to take care of myself and others? If you are ill, stay home. Control your sneezes and coughs. If you cough into your hand, remember the virus could be live on your hand at least for a few minutes, so wash your hands before touching anyone else. If you get symptoms suggesting the flu, call your doctor. Resist going to the doctor's office or a hospital to avoid sprading the disease to others.

12. What else can I do? Keep in touch with the most recent CDC messages through the following links:

<http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/investigation.htm>

http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/general_info.htm

<http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/whatsnew.htm>