

What You REALLY Need To Know About The Swine Flu Pandemic



Al Sears, MD

... and how to protect yourself - **RIGHT NOW**

In This Urgent Health Alert:

- The cold, hard facts about the flu and the swine flu
- How concerned should *you really* be about swine flu?
- THE SINGLE BEST THING YOU CAN DO RIGHT NOW to protect yourself from the threat of swine flu...
- Additional steps you should take to protect yourself from swine flu...

Dear Concerned Reader,

By now, you probably feel overwhelmed by all the swine flu news stories, rumors, speculation, and so-called "advice" going on.

I know I do.

I don't think I've ever witnessed such massive, widespread, and sustained media hysteria over a health-related concern in my entire career.

It feels even more "in your face" than the infamous "Avian Flu/H5N1/SARS" stories that dominated headlines a few years ago!

Just how prevalent have these new swine flu stories become?

Check this out.

Just moments ago, a colleague told me that on Sunday morning, he typed in the words "swine flu" in Google News and hit "enter."

Over 1.12 BILLION swine-flu related stories came up.

Yes... that's billion with a "B."

That's because this endless barrage of swine flu information can be confusing and even misleading to people who just want the facts.

Even Vice President Biden has helped propagate some of this confusing and misleading information. In fact, he was forced to apologize for disseminating "less-than-trustworthy" information about swine flu after his interview with Matt Lauer of NBC News Today.

So who should you listen to? What information can you trust? What do you *really* need to know? And how should you really protect yourself from the threat of swine flu?

That's why I'm writing you today.

In the next few minutes, I'm going to tell you EXACTLY what you need to know about swine flu... in plain and simple English.

I'm also going to tell you if you REALLY need to be concerned... or if this is just overblown media hype.

And finally, I'm going to tell you **the single best thing you can do to protect yourself against any possible swine flu threats** (You may be surprised - and relieved - when you find out my recommendations.)

So let's get started.

First, some cold, hard facts about "the flu"

If you're like many other people we've heard from lately, you may be wondering, "If swine flu is just a flu strain, why is considered so dangerous? Isn't catching the flu the same thing as 'catching a cold?'"

Not quite.

Here are 10 quick facts about influenza you should know:

- 1) Influenza (more commonly known as "the flu") is a highly-contagious viral infection of the upper respiratory tract... just like the common cold.
- 2) However, the common cold only lasts for 1 week to 10 days and primarily affects your nose, mouth and throat. The flu, on the other hand, lasts up to 12 days or more... and affects your entire body. Catch a cold and you'll feel a little under the weather. Catch the flu and you'll feel like you've been hit by a bus. It's a big difference.
- 3) The flu is spread easily through coughing, sneezing, and contact with everyday objects such as glasses, utensils, keyboards, telephones, drinking fountains, exercise equipment, doorknobs, and other objects people touch.
- 4) Because the flu spreads so easily, anywhere from 25% to 50% of the population can become infected during an epidemic.
- 5) Up to 36,000 Americans die each year of influenza, with approximately 200,000 hospitalized from the virus.
- 6) During the influenza epidemic of 1918, over 50 million people were killed worldwide. It also afflicted over 25 percent of the US population.
- 7) The flu does not discriminate. It can afflict you without warning.

- 8) There are over 200 individual strains of the flu virus... and they're constantly changing. Therefore, vaccinations are only partly successful in preventing flu outbreaks.
- 9) If you have a weakened immune system or a chronic condition such as heart or lung disease, you are especially at risk of contracting the flu virus.
- 10) The flu is rarely dangerous in healthy adults... especially those with **a strong immune system.**

If you take proper precautions and safety measures, you can drastically reduce your chances of contracting the flu virus.

I'll tell you all the precautions and safety measures you need to take in just a moment.

But first, here are some common questions we've been hearing about the swine flu strain... with some simple answers.

Frequently Asked Questions About Swine Flu

1) What exactly is Swine Flu?

According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), swine flu is a new strain of influenza virus. It was first detected in people in April 2009 in the USA. It's spread from person-to-person, probably in much the same way that regular seasonal flu viruses spread.

2) Why is it called "Swine Flu?"

Lab testing initially showed that many of the genes in the virus were similar to flu viruses that often occur in North American pigs.¹ That's where the name "Swine Flu" came from. However, after further study, it's been determined that the swine flu virus is actually quite different from the virus that shows up in North American pigs.

(By the way, according to the World Health Organization, there is no evidence that pigs are passing the virus to humans, or that eating pork products poses an infection risk.²)

3) How many people have been infected so far? How many have died from it? And where has swine flu spread?

As of Wednesday, May 6, there have been 1,516 cases of swine flu documented in 22 countries, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). So far, 42 people in Mexico have died from swine flu ... as well as two people in the US.

Confirmed cases of swine flu (as of 06:00GMT on Wednesday, May 6, 2009):

**Worldwide (by country)
As of 06:00 GMT on Wednesday,
May 6, 2009:**

- 1) Mexico822
- 2) USA.....403
- 3) Canada165
- 4) Spain.....57
- 5) The United Kingdom27
- 6) Germany9
- 7) New Zealand6
- 8) Italy5
- 9) Israel.....4
- 10) France4
- 11) El Salvador.....2
- 12) South Korea2
- 13) Ireland.....1
- 14) Australia1
- 15) China.....1
- 16) Denmark.....1
- 17) Netherlands.....1
- 18) Switzerland1
- 19) Costa Rica1
- 20) Guatemala1
- 21) Ireland.....1
- 22) Portugal1

**In the USA (by state):
As of 11:00 AM ET on Tuesday,
May 5, 2009:**

- 1) New York 90
- 2) Illinois 82
- 3) California 49
- 4) Texas 41
- 5) Delaware 20
- 6) Arizona..... 17
- 7) South Carolina 16
- 8) Oregon..... 15
- 9) Louisiana 7
- 10) Massachusetts..... 6
- 11) New Jersey 6
- 12) Colorado..... 6
- 13) Florida 5
- 14) Alabama 4
- 15) Maryland 4
- 16) Indiana..... 3
- 17) Virginia 3
- 18) Wisconsin 3
- 19) Kansas 2
- 20) Michigan..... 2
- 21) Tennessee 2
- 22) Connecticut..... 1
- 23) Kentucky 1
- 24) Missouri..... 1
- 25) Minnesota 1
- 26) Nevada..... 1
- 27) Ohio..... 1
- 28) Rhode Island..... 1
- 29) Georgia 1
- 30) Idaho 1
- 31) Iowa 1
- 32) Maine 1
- 33) Nebraska 1
- 34) New Hampshire 1
- 35) New Mexico 1
- 36) North Carolina..... 1
- 37) Pennsylvania..... 1
- 38) Utah 1

4) What's the most likely way these people caught swine flu?

Flu viruses are mainly spread from person to person through coughing or sneezing by people with the flu. Contact with contaminated objects and then touching your mouth, eyes, or nose is also a viable means of catching swine flu.

5) What are the symptoms of swine flu?

Symptoms include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills, and fatigue. Vomiting and diarrhea have also been reported.

6) What should I do if I develop these symptoms?

Contact your primary care physician immediately.

7) Should I take a vaccine to protect myself against swine flu?

There is no vaccine available right now to protect against swine flu.

8) Should I avoid public places and/or cancel my travel plans?

You can continue to travel and do the things you normally do, but exercise extreme caution wherever you go. Remember how flu viruses are transmitted. Wash your hands frequently. Don't touch your eyes, mouth, and nose. Insist on clean silverware and glassware at public restaurants. Avoid public toilets (especially airplane toilets) unless it's an absolute emergency. Try to stay away from huge crowds. Abstain from heavy drinking. Don't smoke. Eat well. And supplement your diet wisely.

(HINT: You might even want to carry around a small bottle of disinfectant with you and spray things like doorknobs, toilet seats, handles, or any other place that is regularly touched by humans. Next to **building and maintaining a strong immune system**, this is one of the strongest ways to prevent transmission of swine flu if you'll be out and about in public places).

9) Should I avoid any certain types of food... like pork?

There is no evidence that eating any types of food can transmit swine flu... including pork. However, make sure to wash all your food carefully before eating. And if you're in a public restaurant, make sure all your utensils and glasses are clean. Don't forget to wash your hands carefully before and after eating.

10) What should I do if swine flu becomes much more widespread?

First and foremost, don't panic. If swine flu develops into a full-blown pandemic, stay calm, continue to take all necessary precautions to reduce your chances of catching swine flu, and keep on living your life. If we reach that point, we'll keep you up-to-date on what you should do to continue protecting yourself.

This brings up another point...

How concerned should you really be about Swine Flu?

Well... it depends on who you ask.

To start off, here's what the media's been saying:

"The H1N1 [swine flu] virus has spread throughout most of the country, and health officials said Sunday that they expect more severe cases and deaths from what's commonly called swine flu."

- USAToday.com, Monday, May 4, 2009

"... the swine flu outbreak could gain momentum in the months ahead... in 1918 the Spanish flu showed a surge in the spring, and then disappeared in the summer months, only to return in the autumn of 1918 with a vengeance... that that eventually killed 40 million to 50 million people."

- CNN.com, Monday, May 4, 2009

"... swine flu is spreading just as easily as regular winter flu, with 226 confirmed cases in 30 U.S. states."

- MSNBC.com, Monday, May 4, 2009

And then, there's the very recent comments from Dr. Anne Schuchat, Interim Deputy Director of the Centers for Disease Control (CDC):

"Virtually all of the United States probably has the virus circulating now... the virus has arrived. I do expect more cases, more severe cases and I do expect more deaths," she added. "And I'm particularly concerned about what will happen in the fall."

Doesn't paint the rosiest of pictures, does it?

Here's my take on swine flu.

As I mentioned in a previous report, I don't believe this is going to be the huge pandemic the fear mongers are predicting.

But I do think it could have some widespread effects. And it's definitely no time to be complacent, either.

Just look at what happened in 1918, when the Spanish flu virus virtually disappeared in the summer months, then returned to kill 40 to 50 million people.

Those that were unprepared for it paid the ultimate price.

So what can you do to prepare and protect yourself *this time around*?

The single best thing you can do to protect yourself against the threat of swine flu – RIGHT AWAY

The single best way to protect yourself against the threat of swine flu is to **START BUILDING YOUR IMMUNE SYSTEM.**

And I wouldn't waste any time getting started, either.

Here's why.

Your immune system protects the body. When it is weak, you're much more susceptible to flus, viruses, and colds.

And because swine flu transmits from host to host so easily – simply through coughing, sneezing, or contact with commonly-touched objects – having a weak immune system would be the last thing in the world you’d want right now.

What lowers your immune system?

Here are some of the most common factors:

- Stress
- Lack of rest and sleep
- Eating processed/junk food
- Lack of antioxidants in your diet **(critical)**
- Inadequate nutritional supplementation **(critical)**
- Excessive consumption of alcohol and smoking
- Pollution

If you feel you’re not taking care of yourself as well as you should, your immune system may be in a weakened state... putting you at a higher risk for contracting swine flu.

On the other hand, when your immune system is strong, you’ll have sufficient antibodies in your system. And should you happen to catch swine flu, these antibodies will help you fight through the swine flu and survive.

Here are my recommendations for building a super strong immune system:

Nutritional Supplements and Herbs That Can Help Build Your Immune System

- **Daily Multi-Vitamin** – Unfortunately, with our western diet of processed and refined foods, most of us are lacking all the vitamins our bodies need. This chronic lack of critical nutrients puts you at risk for today’s most serious health threats... including swine flu. I always say that taking a multi vitamin is the first step to better health for everyone. It’s inexpensive and easy to add to your daily routine. I recommend that my patients use a multi-vitamin to make sure they’re getting everything they need for the best of health.
- **CoQ10** - CoQ10 is a powerful antioxidant that shields your body from the free radicals that bombard your cells every single day. I recommend that everyone take CoQ10 regularly as a constant source of new energy for your cells.
- **SOD** - Often called the body’s “master antioxidant,” SOD can do more for your health than any other antioxidant on the planet. SOD doesn’t just seek and destroy free radicals... it acts as a suit of armor, making every cell in your body more resilient and better able to fight off free radical attacks.
- **Resveratrol** - Resveratrol acts as a potent antioxidant by binding with free radicals. It’s found naturally in grapes, blueberries and cranberries. It’s

difficult – if not impossible – to get enough of it from food alone, but you can pick it up in any health food store.

- **Cod Liver Oil** - The omega 3 essential fatty acids found in cod liver oil can help reduce inflammation. And it's full of Vitamin D, which acts as a great immune system booster. In fact, a recent study found that people recovering from colds, flus and other respiratory infections had low levels of vitamin D in their blood. The study results also showed people with lower levels of vitamin D were 40% more likely to have respiratory infections.³
- **Vitamin A.** Once known as the "anti-infective vitamin" vitamin A is a micronutrient essential for immunity.⁴ People who are deficient in vitamin A are more susceptible to infectious diseases in general, but especially viral infections like swine flu. Check your multi-vitamin for adequate vitamin A content.
- **Vitamin C.** Vitamin C (ascorbic acid) may be the most important vitamin for building and maintaining your immune system. It stimulates the immune system by enhancing white blood cell response and function, increasing interferon (a special chemical factor that fights viral infections) and enhancing the activity of certain immune cells.^{5,6}
- **Vitamin E.** Vitamin E exerts strong immune-enhancing activity. In a recent study, researchers measured the effect of Vitamin E supplementation on immune function by giving different dosages of Vitamin E to 88 patients over the age of 65. The researchers measures T-cell function as an indicator of immune system condition. The group that received the largest amount of Vitamin E (800IU) had a 65% increase in T-cell function... while the group that received the smallest amount (60IU) only had a 20% increase in T-cell function.

NOTE: In a randomized controlled trial, a combination of antioxidants Vitamin A, Vitamin C, and Vitamin E significantly improved immune cell number and activity in a group of hospitalized elderly people.⁷

- **Carotenes.** Beta-carotene and other carotenoids have demonstrated a number of immune-enhancing effects in recent studies. They've increased immune cell numbers and activity in both animal and human research.^{8,9} To get your carotenes, eat plenty of brightly-colored fruits and vegetables.
- **Iron, Selenium, and Zinc.** Numerous studies have demonstrated that these minerals play a vital role in many immune system reactions.
- **Echinacea.** This is perhaps the most widely used herb to help enhance the immune system. It can strengthen the immune system even in healthy people. Human studies have found that Echinacea taken orally stimulates the function of a variety of immune cells, particularly natural "killer" cells.¹⁰
- **Asian ginseng.** A double-blind study of healthy people found that taking 100mg of a standardized extract of Asian ginseng twice a day improved immune function.¹¹

Lifestyle Changes That Can Help Build Your Immune System

Get plenty of rest and sleep. It can be tough to get the 7-8 hours of sleep you need to function at your best during the day (and keep your immune system strong) but it's well worth it. Try to go to sleep at the same time each and every night. Spend some time simply relaxing before you go to sleep. Avoid caffeinated beverages late at night. And make sure your mattress is high-quality.

Get adequate exercise (but don't overdo it). Obesity is associated with decreased immune status, so if you're overweight, you're at risk and should consider starting up an exercise program.

Spend more time doing things you enjoy. Your mind and emotions have a tremendous impact on your immune function. So make sure you take some time to enjoy yourself. Your immune system will thank you for it.

And last, but certainly not least...

GET OUT IN THE SUN!

Our native sun, from which we have all but divorced ourselves, forms a critical element in a strong immune defense.

You see, sunlight helps your body produce Vitamin D, which regulates immune function. Yes... getting sun is good for you!

Here's another interesting fact.

Research suggests that the vitamin D your body naturally produces from sunlight has stronger immune boosting effects when it's in the presence of antioxidants like vitamin C, vitamin E, beta carotene, and CoQ10.¹²

So go ahead and spend some more time outside, eat well, and have fun!

Protecting Yourself From Swine Flu – The Essentials

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.
- Don't touch your eyes, hands, and mouth. These are entry points for viruses.
- **WASH YOUR HANDS FREQUENTLY!** Especially after coughing or sneezing, after using the bathroom, and before eating.
- Stay away from others who are sick. Avoid crowds.
- Get enough sleep. Eat well. Exercise.
- Use proper supplementation to keep your immune system strong.
- Don't share glasses, cups, or utensils.
- Use disinfecting spray in your household and keep things squeaky clean.
- Spray your work area with a disinfecting spray or wipe and keep it clean regularly.

REFERENCES

- ¹ http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/swineflu_you.htm
- ² http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20090503/ap_on_re_ca/cn_canada_swine_flu_135
- ³. Archives of Internal Medicine, Vol.169 No.4, Feb. 23, 2009.
- ⁴ Semba RD. Vitamin A, immunity, and infection. *Clin Infect Dis* 1994;19:489–99 [review].
- ⁵Anderson R. The immunostimulatory, anti-inflammatory and anti-allergic properties of ascorbate. *Adv Nutr Res* 1984;6:19–45 [review].
- ⁶Banic S. Immunostimulation by vitamin C. *Int J Vitam Nutr Res Suppl* 1982;23:49–52 [review].
- ⁷Penn ND, Purkins L, Kelleher J, et al. The effect of dietary supplementation with vitamins A, C and E on cell-mediated immune function in elderly long-stay patients: a randomized controlled trial. *Age Ageing* 1991;20:169–74.
- ⁸Chew BP. Role of carotenoids in the immune response. *J Dairy Sci* 1993;76:2804–11.
- ⁹Bendich A. Beta-carotene and the immune response. *Proc Nutr Soc* 1991;50:263–74.
- ¹⁰ See DM, Broumand N, Sahl L, Tilles JG. In vitro effects of echinacea and ginseng on natural killer and antibody-dependent cell cytotoxicity in healthy subjects and chronic fatigue syndrome or acquired immunodeficiency syndrome patients. *Immunopharmacology* 1997;35:229–35.
- ¹¹Scaglione F, Ferrara F, Dugnani S, et al. Immunomodulatory effects of two extracts of *Panax ginseng* CA Meyer. *Drugs Exptl Clin Res* 1990;16:537–42.
- ¹² Sears, A (2007) The Doctor's Heart Cure p.191