

# What you need to know about the Swine Flu

## Why is Swine Flu in The News?

The number of fatalities in Mexico coupled with reported cases in the US, Canada and New Zealand brought the outbreak to the attention of health officials and the media. Also of concern is the fact that the strain in Mexico is attacking healthy young people, a trait usually associated with pandemic flu bugs.

## What is Swine Flu?

Swine flu is just what it sounds like...a strain of flu that effects pigs and usually remains just that. Sometimes a strain of swine flu will mutate and is contracted by humans. This strain appears to be a mixture of swine, avian and human viruses and mutated viruses concern health officials due to their resistance to existing vaccines. A high fever, consistent cough, sore throat and possibly vomiting and diarrhea are the most common symptoms of swine flu, but those symptoms can be caused by countless other conditions as well. If you or someone you've been in close contact with has recently returned from Mexico and your flu-like symptoms persist, contact your doctor. Only a lab test can identify swine flu.

**No vaccine for swine flu exists currently**, but the Center for Disease Control has begun the steps needed to create one, in case that becomes necessary. ***This season's flu shot does not offer protection to this virus.***

## How to Protect Yourself

The most common question on everyone's mind is "how can I protect myself?" The good news is that common health tips that help stop the spread of seasonal flu can be effective with preventing swine flu as well. The following are recommended steps from the CDC:

**Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.**

- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.

**If you get sick with influenza, CDC recommends that you stay home from work or school and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them.**