



# Swine Influenza

## What is Swine Influenza?

Swine influenza or "swine flu" is a highly contagious respiratory disease of pigs caused by a type of influenza A virus.

## Why is there concern about Swine Influenza?

Swine flu viruses do not usually infect humans however sporadic infections have occurred. Cases have occurred in people with direct exposure to pigs and human to human spread has occurred.

The greatest concern regarding swine influenza is whether a new worldwide pandemic is possible.

## What are the symptoms of swine influenza?

The new strain causes a spectrum of severity (from mild to life-threatening) of clinical disease.

Initial symptoms of high fever (often a temperature of more than 38°) with a cough, sore throat and lethargy. Lower respiratory tract symptoms due to pneumonia have been common in patients.

## Incubation period

The incubation period is uncertain but may be up to 14 days. Severely immunocompromised people can shed the virus for weeks or months.

## How is it spread?

Human acquisition of influenza virus from pigs is most likely to occur with direct contact with infected pigs.

Human to human transmission of swine influenza virus is thought to occur in the same way as seasonal flu occurs in people i.e. –

- Mainly person to person transmission through coughing or sneezing of people infected with the influenza virus
- Close contact with respiratory secretions or body fluids of a probable or confirmed case.

## Prevention

Prevention includes good personal hygiene, separation from symptomatic individuals and consideration of preventative antiviral therapy if exposed.

## Vaccines

There is no vaccine currently available with proven efficacy against swine influenza.

## Is there treatment available?

There are antiviral drugs that have been successfully used in the treatment of influenza A virus.

## Australia

There are no current reports of swine influenza in pigs or humans in Australia. The Australian government and other overseas agencies are closely monitoring the situation worldwide.

For more information contact –

## The Alfred Hospital Infection Control & Hospital Epidemiology Unit

03 9076 3139 between 8.00 – 4.30  
Monday to Friday or  
visit our web site at

[www.alfred.org.au/departments/index.html](http://www.alfred.org.au/departments/index.html)  
or contact your site-specific Infection Control nurse.

## References

**The Alfred Infection Control Manual 2007 Guideline 24.**

<http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/>  
<http://www.who.int/csr/disease/swineflu/en/index.html>  
[http://www.health.vic.gov.au/chiefhealthofficer/alerts/influenza\\_a.htm](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/chiefhealthofficer/alerts/influenza_a.htm)