

**H1N1 influenza (swine flu)
Frequently Asked Questions for Homeless People in Seattle and King County**

What is the swine flu?

H1N1 influenza, 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 strain of human flu. It is getting a lot of attention because it has spread around the world and many people have already gotten 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?

Pretty quickly (over a few hours) you would start **feeling bad**, with

- **FEVER (100.5 degrees F or higher)** or fever and chills **AND cough or sore throat**.

You may also have one or more of these:

- Headache
- Muscle aches (back, legs, arms)
- 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 100.5 degrees F or higher.

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. They may also give you a mask to wear.
- If you get sick with those symptoms listed above and you have another health condition like diabetes, emphysema, heart disease, kidney disease, cancer, 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 the swine flu spread?

Just like the regular flu, 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. You hear it often, and it is true, this is the best way to avoid getting sick.
- 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, before eating and before 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. Germs get into your body by your eyes, nose and mouth. Rub your eyes with a clean tissue. Don't fiddle with your moustache or pick your teeth with your fingers. Wash your hands before and after eating or smoking.
- 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.
- Sharing is nice, but during flu season it is especially important to NOT share spoons, forks, straws, cups, glasses, cigarettes, pipes or anything you put in your mouth.
- Share this information with your friends!

Is there a vaccine?

Yes there is, and it will be available mid-late October 2009. You will be able to get the vaccine from your doctor or look for information at shelters and day programs and other community bulletin boards about special flu vaccine clinics.

Is that vaccine safe?

It has been tested in several countries including the USA. It is made and given exactly the same way regular seasonal flu shots are made and given, and there have been no bad reactions to it in the testing trials. It may cause a slightly sore arm the way a regular flu shot might.

Should everybody get the vaccine?

Homeless people are strongly encouraged to get the H1N1 vaccination and the regular flu vaccine. Others who are strongly encouraged to get the H1N1 /swine flu vaccination include pregnant women, children, and people with conditions like asthma, COPD/emphysema, diabetes, heart disease, and other conditions that impact the immune system.

Do I need to get a regular flu vaccine, too?

Yes, please do get your regular flu shot as well as the H1N1 swine flu shot. It **is** still very important to get your regular fl vaccine, 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. This can be very confusing.
- Recorded information is on the Flu Hotline in English and Spanish, 877-903-KING (877-903-5464)
- You can look online at www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu or www.kingcounty.gov/health/H1N1 for up to date information.
- Talk to someone you know and trust if you feel overwhelmed or very anxious or scared.