

Information on Swine Influenza

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the medical and scientific professionals in the U S Embassy are monitoring an ongoing outbreak of swine influenza A (H1N1). Note that swine influenza viruses are types of influenza A but are different from the usual human type A influenza viruses ('the flu'). **Swine flu virus is not H1N5 (Avian Influenza) virus.** There are no specific precautions at this time other than the general hygiene recommendations for living in Russia. There have been no reported cases in Russia.

As of April 25, 2009, 11 cases of swine flu have been documented in U.S.: Texas, California, and Kansas. The cases in the US have been relatively mild and there have been no deaths. The cases in Mexico have been more serious with at least 20 fatalities. This outbreak has the potential to become a pandemic.

The symptoms of swine flu are similar to the symptoms of regular flu and include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people have reported diarrhea and vomiting associated with swine flu. Anyone experiencing any of these influenza-like symptoms who have recently traveled to Mexico or to the areas experiencing swine flu should contact your health care provider.

Swine flu spreads in two ways. The first way is through contact with infected pigs or environments contaminated with swine flu viruses. The second way is through contact with a person infected with a swine flu virus. The current outbreak in the US and Mexico is predominantly human-to-human transmission. The human transmission is probably spread mainly through coughing and sneezing.

Prevention is the key to limiting any respiratory illness in our community. Any person with a fever or the above symptoms should stay home from school to avoid spreading infections (including influenza and other respiratory illnesses) to others in the AAS community. In addition,

--frequent hand washing with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand cleaner can lessen the spread of respiratory illness.

--Avoid close contact with people who are sick. When you are sick, keep your distance from others to protect them (social distancing).

--Cover your mouth and nose with tissue when coughing or sneezing and avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth.

The US Centers for Disease Control recommends the use of oseltamivir (Tamiflu) for the treatment and prevention of infection with the swine flu viruses. Tamiflu is available at Western clinics in Moscow and at most local apothecaries. Your health care provider can help decide the best treatment.

Finally, there is no need to worry about eating or preparing pork. Swine flu is not spread by food. Eating properly handled and cooked pork products is safe.