



Queensland Government
Queensland Health

Human Swine Influenza

Containing the disease

A guide to looking after yourself and your family at home when a household member has Human Swine Influenza.

This booklet explains how to look after yourself or a family member at home when a household member has been diagnosed with suspected or confirmed Human Swine Influenza.

You will have been given this booklet because a health professional has advised that:

- you have been diagnosed with Human Swine Influenza or it is strongly suspected that you could have this disease
OR
- you have been in contact with someone who is thought to have Human Swine Influenza.

It is important that you follow the advice given by health authorities to stay at home. This is one of the best ways to reduce further spread of the disease to people in our community.

If a medical officer believes you may have Human Swine Influenza or have been exposed to someone with this illness, you may be asked to remain in your home while you are infected or until an officer from a Queensland Health Population Health Unit advises you that you are not infected.

As Human Swine Influenza is infectious, remaining at home is recommended to reduce the chances of the infection being passed onto others in the community.

It is important not to confuse the seasonal influenza, a common cold and Swine Flu.

1. What is seasonal influenza?

Seasonal influenza or 'the flu' is a viral infection of the lungs and airways which usually affects people during the winter months from June to September.

Most healthy people recover from influenza without any serious problems. However, there are certain groups of people who are 'at risk' of developing complications which can be very serious, and even cause death.

The seasonal influenza viruses that circulate every winter are often only slightly different to those from the preceding winter, so there is a level of immunity in the community.

A vaccine is available for seasonal influenza and annual vaccination is recommended.

2. Is seasonal influenza different to a 'common' cold?

Yes. A cold comes on slowly, and rarely causes a fever or muscle aches. A cold is generally milder than the 'flu, and people can usually carry on with their usual activities.

People with the 'flu' feel very sick and feverish and want to stay in bed.

3. What is Human Swine Influenza?

Very occasionally, around three or four times a century, a 'new' flu virus, infects many people around the world. This new flu can cause greater sickness and death than the usual winter outbreak of the flu, because people have no immunity against it.

Currently, a new virus called Human Swine Influenza is spreading around the world and has the potential to cause a pandemic.

No vaccine is currently available for this virus. It will take some months to produce a vaccine for Human Swine Influenza.

4. How is Human Swine Influenza spread?

Human Swine Influenza is infectious and can spread from person to person through infected respiratory secretions. Infected people can spread the virus from 1 day before their symptoms develop and for a further 7 days.

People are most likely to spread the virus when they are coughing and sneezing. This commonly occurs if there is close contact (within 1 metre) of an infected person who is coughing, sneezing or talking.

People can also become infected if they get the virus on their hands and transfer it to their eyes, nose or mouth.

The virus can live for several minutes on your hands and for several hours on surfaces, therefore it is very important to wash your hands regularly and keep unwashed hands away from the mouth, nose and eyes.

5. What are the symptoms of Human Swine Influenza?

A person usually develops flu like symptoms within seven days of becoming infected with the virus.

The symptoms of Human Swine Influenza are similar to those of seasonal influenza, including:

- fever (temperature 38⁰ C or higher)
- cough
- sore throat
- runny nose
- nasal congestion or runny nose

Like seasonal flu, Human Swine Influenza may cause worsening of underlying chronic medical conditions.

In some cases, the symptoms may become more severe and medical advice will be needed. If you have any of the following symptoms, then you are advised to urgently seek assistance by telephoning 000 for an ambulance:

- increasing shortness of breath
- coughing up copious amounts of blood
- persistent vomiting
- new chest pain
- profound lethargy
- confusion
- inability to eat or drink

You must inform the telephone operator that you have symptoms of Human Swine Influenza.

6. What do I need to do while infectious?

Looking after yourself:

- Be reachable by telephone.
- Follow the instructions of your healthcare professional.
- Wash your hands with soap and water, especially after blowing your nose or sneezing, before eating or after using the toilet.
- Maintain telephone contact with family, friends and neighbours.
- Arrange by telephone for family, friends or neighbours to assist with any needs you may have during this time.
- Keep up your fluids, especially water, and eat a healthy diet, particularly fruit and vegetables.
- If you are having difficulty breathing or have life threatening symptoms, telephone 000 immediately.
- If symptoms increase, seek advice by telephoning 13 Health (13 432584) before going to a hospital or GP.

Protecting others:

- Do not go to work, school, public places or use public transport.
- Postpone non-essential appointments including medical and dental.

- Keep at least one metre distance from others while you are sick.
- Cover your nose when you cough or sneeze.
- Dispose of used tissues in a lined waste bin.
- Wear a surgical mask (available from pharmacies) when you are around other people if you have symptoms. If you do not have a surgical mask, cover your mouth and nose with a handkerchief or scarf.
- Use separate bed linen and towels. These items should be washed in warm soapy water.
- If possible, sleep in a separate well ventilated room, with the door closed.
- If you are sick with influenza, do not prepare food for people who are not sick.
- Keep personal items separate eg. toothbrushes.
- Do not share cups or eating utensils. After utensils have been washed with warm water and soap, and thoroughly rinsed, they may be used by others.
- Clean surfaces eg. taps, door knobs, tables, telephones which are frequently touched by the sick person, at least daily. Use warm water and detergent, then wipe down with a household disinfectant.
- Unexposed persons who do not need to be in the home should not visit.

Caring for someone who is sick with Human Swine Influenza:

As a carer for someone with this virus, it is important that you know what to do to help the sick person, as well as to protect yourself and others in the home from illness.

- Monitor the person's health and phone their doctor or 13HEALTH if their condition deteriorates.
- Follow the health care worker's advice regarding management of symptoms.
- Ensure the person drinks plenty of fluids and encourage as healthy a diet as possible.
- Wash your hands with soap and water, or use an alcohol hand gel after any contact with the sick person or any items touched by the sick person.
- Wear a surgical mask (available from pharmacies) when you are around the sick person and ask them to wear a surgical mask as well, if possible.

- Use separate bed linen and towels for the sick person. These items should be washed with warm water and detergent before being used by others.
- Keep personal items, like toothbrushes, separate.
- Do not share cups or eating utensils. After washing utensils with warm water and soap, and then rinsing well, they may be used by others.
- Ensure that counters, tabletops, door knobs, bathroom fixtures and the telephone are cleaned with disinfectant or soap and warm water at least daily. If the person is infected with the virus, all surfaces that have been touched, sneezed or coughed over also need to be cleaned.
- Sleep in a separate room if possible.

Caring for your child:

To limit the spread of infection:

- Teach your child to wash hands frequently with soap and water, and model the correct behaviour.
- Teach your child to cover coughs and sneezes with tissues, and model that behaviour.
- Teach your child to stay away from others as much as possible if they or others are sick.
- Keep your child home from school or child care if sick.

Very young children and infants probably have similar flu symptoms but may not know how to tell people they have sore muscles or a headache.

These children may be irritable and eat poorly or develop a hoarse cry and barking cough (like croup). Younger children, especially those under six months of age may also have diarrhea, vomiting and stomach pain.

Some things you can do for your child are:

- Give paracetamol every four to six hours for the fever in the dose recommended on the package (unless your doctor says otherwise).
- Dress the child in lightweight clothing and keep the room temperature at about 20⁰ Celsius if possible.
- Offer cool fluids frequently when the child is awake.

- Avoid cold baths.
- Allow the child to rest at home while he/she has influenza-like symptoms.

Take your child to the hospital emergency or call 000 for an ambulance if your child:

- has severe difficulty breathing (which is not caused by a stuffy nose)
- has blue lips
- is limp or unable to move
- is hard to wake up, unusually quiet or unresponsive
- has a stiff neck
- seems confused
- has a seizure (convulsion/fit)
- has not had a wet nappy in 12 hours

7. Your home

It is important to prepare your home so that you and your family may safely manage at home.

Particular consideration should be given to the needs of young children, older people and people with a disability.

If possible, your home should have:

- √ a separate well ventilated room for any person with influenza symptoms, with a door that can be kept closed
and
- √ a separate bathroom for use only by the person with influenza symptoms.

If a separate bathroom is not possible, a minimum of daily cleaning of the bathroom with a household disinfectant is recommended.

Develop a plan

Ensure that you have a plan to look after yourself at home. The plan should include:

- contact details for family, friends, neighbours, work and healthcare providers, eg. GP, your nearest Population Health Unit, the Influenza Hotline, 13 Health (13 43 25 84).

- a 'flu monitoring plan including how to recognise influenza symptoms, how to get help, who to call, at what time, and how frequently.

Keep up to date with information:

- through the media eg radio, newspaper or television
- go to QH Swine Flu at http://qheps.health.qld.gov.au/swine_flu/ or go to
- www.health.gov.au or www.health.qld.gov.au or
- Department of Health and Ageing Public Information Hotline 180 2007
- Queensland Government Information line 131304

8. What do I do if I need assistance during the time I need to stay at home?

If you need assistance with any of the following and you do not have someone to help you, please telephone 13 Health (**13 432584**).

- Access to medical care or a pharmacy for medications
- Personal care, nursing care
- Preparing meals
- Providing food and essential goods, banking etc
- Home care/domestic assistance
- Counseling services
- Access to interpreter services or specific language information
- Assistance with child care or care for an older person
- Financial assistance with food or paying of usual bills

9. What do I need to make staying at home easier?

For the time you are asked to stay at home or caring for someone who is sick, it will help if you are able to ask someone to help provide you with some of the following additional household supplies.

- At least one week supply of food. Choose long lasting foods in cans and packets, and dried foods. For example:
 - powdered or long life milk,
 - cereals, flour, sugar,
 - ready-to-eat meats, fruits, vegetables and canned soups
 - fruit/muesli bars
 - fruit juices (including canned)
 - rice, pasta, noodles
 - dried fruits and nuts,
 - cracker biscuits and spreads
 - food, drink and nappies for babies
- Medication for diagnosed chronic conditions – at least one week supply.
- Pet food, if you have a pet.
- Sanitary items.
- Can opener.
- Books, games, DVDs/videos for entertainment.
- A first aid kit which includes:
 - a thermometer for each person (digital or disposable)
 - surgical masks (available from pharmacies)
 - disposable gloves
 - soap or alcohol based hand wash (available from pharmacies)
 - paracetamol
- A reliable torch and spare batteries, as well as a radio and spare batteries.
- Tissues, plastic bags for used tissues.
- Cleaning products, disinfectant.

Ensure that you check the expiry dates on all items and rotate as needed.

10. Important Phone Numbers

Department of Health and Ageing Public Information Hotline	180 2007
Queensland Government Information line	131304
13 Health	13 43 25 84
Doctor	
Population Health Unit	5409 6600
Queensland Ambulance service	000
Work	
Family	
Neighbours	

Important Websites

Go to www.health.gov.au or www.qld.gov.au