



SWINE FLU

What is the Flu?

The flu is an infection in your lungs that is caused by a virus. There are lots of different kinds of flu, like the one that happens every winter, which you can get a flu shot to prevent. And there are others that primarily infect animals, like bird flu and now swine flu. The real name for swine flu is H1N1 flu. It is called swine flu because the virus that causes this flu also causes flu in pigs. You cannot get this flu from eating pork, bacon, sausages or any other pork products.

What Can I Do Now to Prevent Getting the Swine Flu?

You are not helpless about the flu. Little things can make a big difference:

- Wash your hands well and often.
- If water or soap are not available, use hand cleaners that have alcohol in them.
- When you cough or sneeze, cover your nose and mouth by coughing into your arm. This should be done so that the spray from your cough does not get into the air.
- Properly dispose of your tissue after you use it.
- Wash your hands after coughing or sneezing.

And remember the “Don’ts”:

- Don’t touch your nose, mouth, or eyes if you are sick, because that’s where germs like to live.
- Don’t crowd around people who are sick.
- Don’t go to work or school if you are sick.

Most importantly, call your midwife, nurse, or doctor if you think you are sick. Medicines are available to help you.

But I’m Pregnant. I Can’t Take Medicines.

There are some medicines you should not take if you are pregnant. But if you have the swine flu and you are pregnant, you are more likely to get pneumonia. So if you experience flu symptoms, it is important to call your midwife, nurse, or doctor right away. There are at least 2 medicines that you might receive. Oseltamivir, also known as Tamiflu, and zanamivir, known as Relenza, may be given to you. There is not a lot of information about using these when you are pregnant, but there never has been a report of harm.

If you are told that you have the swine flu, you also will be asked to help keep it from spreading to other people. You may be asked to stay home, to stay away from others, to wear masks if you do see others, and to eat well and get good amounts of sleep. Your health, your baby’s health, and the health of your neighborhood are very important.

I’m Not Pregnant, But I’m Breastfeeding.

Good for you! You are helping protect your baby from sickness. If you have the swine flu and get the medicines above, they do go through the milk to the baby in very small amounts. But no problems have been found by women who have breastfed while taking the drugs. More importantly, your breast milk is giving your baby all the immunity you are making, which will protect both of you from most illnesses you are exposed to.

It would be great if we knew all about the drugs during pregnancy and breastfeeding, but your care will be based on “risks” and “benefits.” If you have swine flu, the risk to you and the baby seems low while the benefits of the medicines are high.

What Are the Symptoms of the H1N1 Flu?

The symptoms of this flu are the same symptoms you get when you have any flu: People who have the flu have fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, cough, weakness, diarrhea or vomiting.

What Should I Do if I Get Flu Symptoms?

Stay home! and call your health care provider. You may get well without needing any medicine and if you do need medicine, your health care provider will tell you where to go to get it. If you have the flu, you should stay home for 7 days after you first developed symptoms or after you have been completely well for 24 hours.

Is there a Vaccination I Can Get to Keep from Getting the H1N1 Flu?

There is not a vaccine at this time that will protect you from H1N1 virus. If you got the seasonal vaccine offered once a year in the fall and winter recently, it will provide some protection so you are not as likely to get the H1N1 flu if you are exposed to it.

I'm Just Confused.

In times like this, it is easy to be confused. New information about the swine flu is being released every day. When you have questions, ask your midwife, nurse, or doctor. We all want you and your family to be healthy.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Pigs, People, and Public Health

www.pork.org/PorkScience/Documents/PUBLICHEALTH%20influenza.pdf

Key Facts about Swine Influenza

www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/key_facts.htm

What Pregnant Women Should Know about H1N1 (Swine Flu) Virus

www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidance/pregnant.htm

For Breastfeeding Mothers

H1N1 Flu (Swine Flu) and Feeding Your Baby: What Parents Should Know

www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/breastfeeding.htm

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