

Should I be worried about Swine Flu?

You've heard news reports and you may be feeling the sudden spread of global panic. Swine influenza is spreading around the world fairly quickly - In addition to the large number of cases in Mexico, countries like Spain, New Zealand, the US, UK and Canada are reporting cases too. Should you be worried about Swine Flu? How can you protect yourself against the disease?

Isn't Swine flu for swines?

Well, yes. Although swine flu viruses usually only affect pigs, they can mutate to cross the species barrier and become infectious for humans.

Is there a vaccine?

No, there isn't a specific vaccine for this type of flu virus. However, a seasonal flu vaccine may be useful in prevention but this is still being investigated.

Why is Swine Flu dangerous?

In some people, swine flu causes hardly any symptoms or it causes mild flu symptoms. However, in some cases the infection can be severe and lead to pneumonia and it may be fatal.

How can I prevent infection?

- The best way of reducing your risk of infection is to avoid close contact with someone who is visibly sick.
- If you wash your hands regularly and thoroughly, this will also help you to reduce your risk of infection.
- Stay healthy - eat a balanced, nutritious diet, exercise regularly and get enough sleep.

What should you do if you think you have swine flu?

Treat it as you would a normal flu infection:

- Rest, keep hydrated and warm
- Avoid infecting others. Don't go to work or into public places.
- Wash your hands regularly and thoroughly

What if you need to go to the doctor or a hospital?

If you think your symptoms are severe, phone ahead to warn your doctor or hospital that you think you may have swine flu. Try to avoid spreading the virus to anyone else while you are travelling by covering your nose and mouth area.

Source: World Health Organisation

