

Swine influenza

As swine flu is a new type of influenza, many people lack resistance against it. Symptoms include a high temperature or fever, a cough, a sore throat, aching muscles, headache, tiredness, and diarrhoea and vomiting. If you have these symptoms you must stay at home until you have been free from fever for one day. People living or staying in Stockholm County for a longer period of time qualify for free vaccination against swine flu.

The latest influenza A(H1N1), widely known as swine flu, affects all ages, particularly people under the age of thirty. Most become mildly ill. Only around five per cent of people in Sweden who have contracted the virus have needed hospital treatment, with only a small number needing intensive care. A very small number of cases have resulted in a fatal outcome.

Similar to normal flu

Swine flu symptoms are similar to those of normal flu. They include a high temperature or fever, a cough, a sore throat, aching muscles, headache, tiredness, and diarrhoea and vomiting.

The flu normally lasts five to seven days but the tiredness could continue for a further two to three weeks. As with normal flu, you may develop complications such as pneumonia, sinusitis and other infections.

How to avoid contracting the virus

Swine flu is spread in the same way as normal flu. The virus is spread through the air when an infected person coughs or sneezes and other people breath it in. You run a greater risk of contracting the virus if you meet many people and have close contact indoors. The virus does not spread as easily outdoors and cannot be spread through pork or any other foodstuff.

You can reduce the risk of infection by:

- Avoiding close contact with other people, such as shaking hands or kissing on the cheek
- Washing your hands frequently and perhaps applying a hand sanitizer afterwards
- Washing your hands before touching your eyes, nose and mouth
- Avoiding close contact with people you know are ill
- Coughing or sneezing into the crook of your arm or in a paper tissue
- Being outdoors as much as possible

If you become ill

Flu is caused by a virus so does not respond to antibiotics. If you are in good health generally then it is usually sufficient to simply relieve the symptoms.

- Stay at home from work or school until you have been free from fever for one day
This normally takes five to seven days

- Avoid making errands and meeting people unless absolutely necessary. It is important not to infect other people.
- Drink plenty of water.
- Get plenty of rest.
- Get plenty of sleep.
- If necessary, take painkillers and fever-reducing medicine.

Seek medical advice

If you belong to a risk category or are pregnant

Some people run a greater risk of becoming seriously ill from this new form of influenza. This applies in particular to people who suffer from:

- Chronic cardiovascular diseases
- Chronic lung diseases, such as asthma and COPD
- Chronic liver or kidney disorders
- Diabetes
- Impaired immune defence caused by, for example, hereditary immune deficiencies, ongoing treatment that impairs the immune defence, leukaemia, HIV
- Neurological and neuromuscular diseases that affect the respiratory system, such as ALS, MS, Parkinson's disease
- Extreme obesity (BMI over 40)

Also:

- Pregnant women
- Children with cerebral palsy and other multifunctional disabilities

If you belong to one of the risk categories and have flu symptoms you must seek medical advice immediately. This also applies if you are caring for a person with flu who belongs to one of the risk categories. Call the Vårdguiden on 08-320 100, and press button 0 for a 24-hour advice service in Swedish and English.

Other

If the flu lasts for longer than a week or if your symptoms are very severe you must seek medical advice. It may be a sign that you have a different illness or that the flu is developing into a more serious illness. Call the Vårdguiden on 08-320 100, and press button 0 for a 24-hour advice service in Swedish and English if, for example:

- You have a high temperature (over 38.5 degrees centigrade) for more than three days
- You have difficulty breathing
- You get severe chest pains
- Your general health is affected

Do not go to a health centre (*vårdcentralen*) or your family doctor (*husläkarmottagningen*) without phoning first. This is important so as to avoid infecting other people.

Interpreter service

If you cannot speak Swedish you are entitled to an interpreter when you go for medical or dental care. This is free of charge. You or your representative must state this when making the appointment. The interpreter can either be with you in person or interpret over the phone.

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